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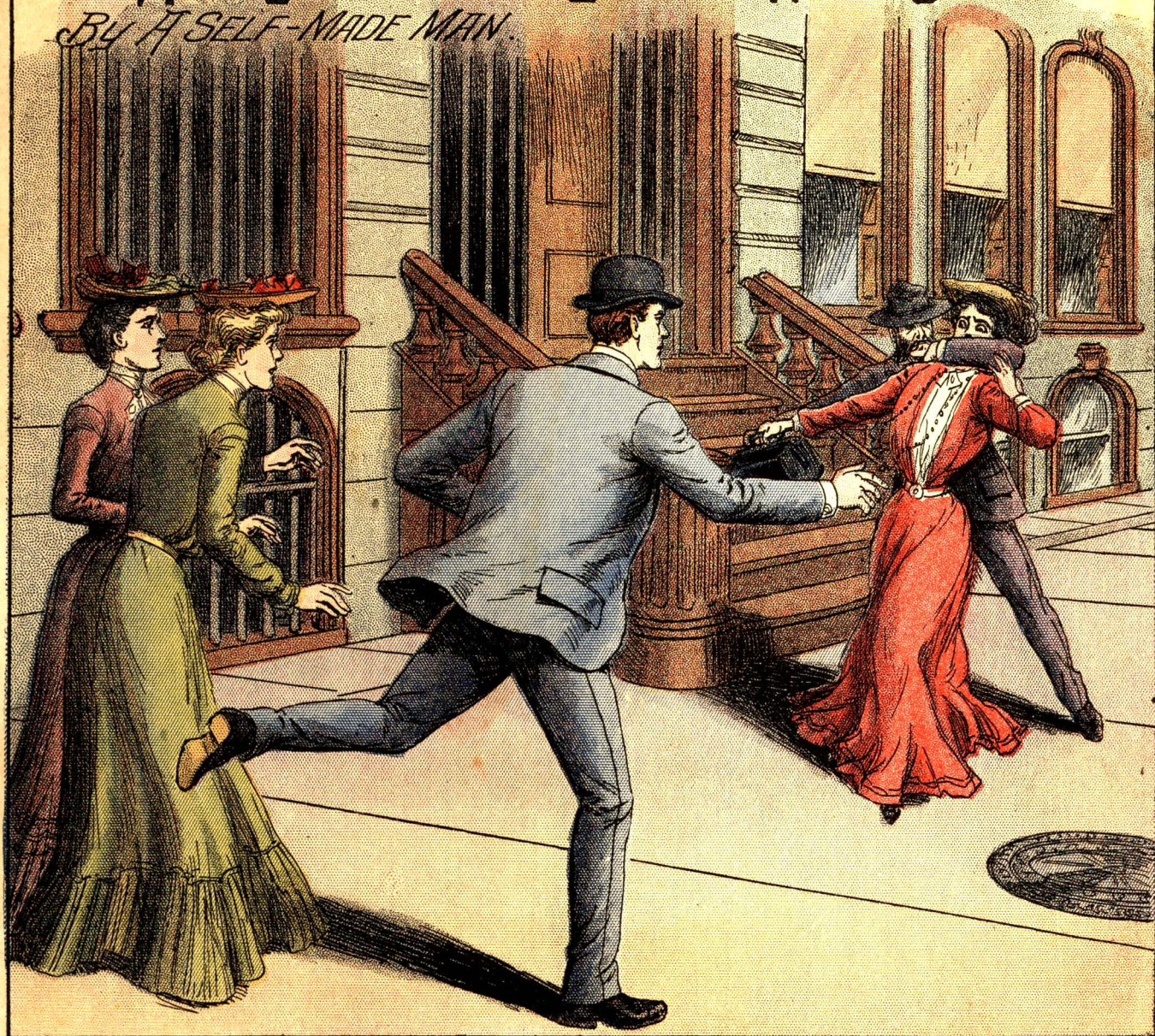
5 CENTS.

FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY.

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

HARD TO BEAT; OR, THE CLEVEREST BOY IN WALL STREET.

By A SELF-MADE MAN.



The man stepped behind the lady. He threw one arm about her neck, pulling her head back, stifling the scream of terror which rose to her lips. Then he made a snatch at and secured the satchel she held in her hand.

Fame and Fortune Weekly

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

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No. 5

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HARD TO BEAT;

OR,

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By A SELF-MADE MAN.

CHAPTER I.

A POINTER ON RED DOG.

"Why, Bob Brooks, where did you get all that money?" asked Kitty Barnes, the pretty stenographer employed by Scrooge & Sharpley, stock brokers, of No. — Wall Street, as the bright-eyed, stalwart young messenger of the establishment shook a check for \$1,500, made out to his order, before her astonished eyes.

He had just taken it from an envelope, bearing the imprint of Treadwell & Co., bankers and brokers, which had reached him by the morning mail.

"You girls want to know everything," grinned the boy. "It was the bump of curiosity that got Mother Eve into trouble, but it seems to me the lesson was wasted."

"The idea! Ain't you just awful!" replied the girl, with a half-roguish, half-reproachful glance.

"Maybe I am, but I haven't forgotten you this morning, all right."

And he handed her a small bunch of violets, her favorite flower, as the boy knew well, which he had till that moment been holding behind his back.

"Oh, thanks! Aren't you kind!" and she flashed him a grateful look.

Kitty Barnes immediately looked interested, for if there is one thing a girl likes more than anything else it is to share in another person's confidence.

"Two-thirds of this check represent my profit on one hundred shares of P. & D. stock that I've been speculating with during the last two weeks on a ten per cent. margin."

"Is that really and truly a fact?" she exclaimed, opening her brown eyes very wide.

"That's what it is; but you mustn't breathe a word to a soul in the office about it, Kitty. Old Scrooge would have a fit if he knew I was monkeying with the market."

"Oh, I wouldn't say a word for the world," assured the stenographer. "Aren't you a lucky boy?"

"It's better to be born lucky than rich, especially down here in the Street. I've been studying Stock Exchange methods and following the fluctuations of the market ever since I came to work here, but the more I look at it the more it seems to be a game of chance after all. I know of several experienced operators who had speculated for the larger part of their lives in Wall Street and who were wiped out in a single hour on the Exchange."

"I have heard of such cases, too," said the girl. "That's why I have no confidence in stock speculation. What made you go into it in the first place?"

"I like the excitement of the thing. Nothing ventured,

nothing gained, you know. I put up my first ten dollars in margins in a bucket-shop."

"Why, Bob Brooks, were you so foolish as that?"

"That's what I was."

"And you lost it, of course?"

"I did not. I drew out three hundred dollars ahead of the game."

"You must have broke up the shop," she answered archly.

"Oh, what I won somebody else lost, I guess."

"Those places are regular pitfalls for office boys and cheap clerks to waste their money in, so I've been told. They ought to be closed up."

"There are other places that ought to be closed up, too, but they manage to flourish somehow or other."

"For instance?" asked the stenographer inquiringly.

"Well, poolrooms, for one thing. I know a number of fellows who sink half their wages regularly in gambling on horses."

"Do you know, I would like to go to some track and see a real race," said Kitty, with sparkling eyes.

"Would you? And have your escort put up a fiver for you on some old plug that didn't have a ghost of a show to win just because it happened to catch your fancy. Oh, I know you girls," grinned Bob.

"You're too mean for anything," she pouted.

"Well, here comes Mr. Sharpley. It's time you and I attended to the business of the firm," and the boy glided over to his chair in the waiting-room and sat down to occupy his leisure with a copy of the Wall Street News.

Presently Mr. Sharpley's bell caused Bob to jump to his feet and make a bee-line for the junior partner's private office.

"Take this letter to the Continental Trust Company. You will get a package to bring back. If I'm not here when you return give it to Mr. Scrooge, if he is here, or put it in the safe until he comes in."

"Yes, sir," replied Bob, in a business-like tone of voice that Mr. Sharpley admired in him, and getting his hat, started off on his errand like a winged Mercury.

"Looks like a pretty smart boy," remarked a customer who was talking to the broker at the moment.

"In our opinion, he's the brightest boy and one of the shrewdest in Wall Street, if you want to know," replied Mr. Sharpley, in a tone of conviction. "And he is as trustworthy as the day is long. I wouldn't mind letting that boy have ten thousand dollars of our good money any time, or twenty thousand, for that matter, to take to the bank or anywhere else. We believe he's above temptation."

"He must be a jewel."

"He's all right."

In the meanwhile Bob Brooks was making for Broadway at the rapid, swinging gait characteristic of him.

As he was crossing at the junction of Nassau street another boy of about his own age ran smack into him with a laugh, and both nearly fell into the gutter.

"What the dickens——" began Bob, in a somewhat belligerent tone. "Oh, it's you, Phil Sharpe!" he added when he recognized the other.

"Yep, it's me, all right," grinned the boy who had been guilty of the intentional assault.

"Well, what do you mean by running into me in that way?"

"Just took a notion to let you know I was alive."

"You're a funny boy," said Bob, suddenly tripping the other up, but letting him down easy on the curb. "How do you like that kind of horseplay yourself?"

"I see you're pretty much alive yourself," replied his friend, as he scrambled to his feet. "I guess we're quits."

"Well, what do you know?"

"Oh, I know several things."

"Do you? Well, I can't stop to pump you. Are you coming my way?"

"Depends. Where are you bound?"

"Continental Trust Company."

"I'll go with you part of the way."

"All right. Step out lively. I haven't seen you for several days. Where have you been keeping yourself?"

"On the wing, as usual. Duncan & Company, my bosses, have work enough for two messengers about my size. I don't get a breathing spell from nine to three."

"You don't seem to be getting thin over it."

"That's right. I'm getting fatter, if anything. Flesh runs up in our family. Dad weighs two hundred and forty; he's the heftiest motorman on the 'L.' Marm tips the beam at one hundred and seventy-five. As for Sis, she belongs to the middleweights. Oh, we're a healthy family, you can bet your suspenders!"

"You look it. How's your sister Sue?"

"Fine. She's got a new job."

"What was the matter with the one she had?"

"She was making all the money that came into the office, so the boss wanted to marry her and cut down expenses; but she wouldn't have it."

"That's pretty good. Did old Giglamps really get sweet on her?"

"That's what he did. Old enough to be her grandfather. She said she wasn't dealing with antiques, so she answered an advertisement in the World; and now she's pounding a Remington for Bloodgood & Morrissey, on Fulton street. They're money brokers."

"I've heard of them. Percy Walcott, of our office, has dealings with them. He is a regular customer. Gets a loan of seventeen dollars and pays back twenty at two dollars per. Some people would call them Shylocks."

"They're out for the dust, like everybody else, so what's the diff? Sis gets two dollars a week more than Giglamps gave her, so she's satisfied."

"She ought to be."

"I should snicker. I think it's about time I got a raise. I use up an awful lot of good shoe leather. Say, how about that P. & D. stock you bought a couple of weeks ago? I see it's gone up."

"Sold out yesterday and made a clean two hundred per cent. profit."

"Get out!" exclaimed Bill incredulously.

"I tell you I did."

"Suffering beeswax! You have hog luck! How much are you worth now?"

"Fifteen hundred. I'll show you the check," and Bob produced it, whereat Phil's eyes bulged.

"What are you going to do with it?" Start a bank?"

"Put it to work."

"And lose it."

"I hope not. I haven't lost any yet, and I started in with ten dollars a few months ago."

"Well, I wish you luck. Are you going to treat to a show on the strength of that check?"

"Sure thing. We'll go to-night if you like."

"That suits me. Come over to the house after supper and you'll find me waiting for you. There's the Continental across the street. I'm going down here."

So the boys parted for the time being.

Just as he was stepping on the opposite curb Bob noticed an envelope with a peculiar device printed on it, and he picked it up to examine it.

It was addressed to a William Smith —, but the rest of the name, as well as the address, had been torn away.

Bob put it into his pocket and then went into the Continental Trust Company and delivered his message.

He was told to go into the reception-room and wait.

To pass away the time he took out the envelope and studied the odd device.

"Quite an idea," he mused.

There was an enclosure and he pulled it out.

The letterhead had the same device, and underneath it was printed "Goldfield Banking and Brokerage Company, Majestic Building, Denver, Col."

Bob was about to tear off the device and throw the letter away when, having nothing better to do, he thought he would read it.

He did, and was much surprised at the character of the contents, which ran as follows:

Denver, Col., Sept. 2, 190—.

"William Smithers, New York.

"Dear Sir: We have just learned from one of our representatives, who is on the ground, that the Red Dog mine, which was abandoned two years ago, or at least so reported, is being quietly developed into one of the big bonanzas of Goldfield. While the management say very little about the property, the report of our correspondent that rich ore is being opened up in their shaft, and the fact that the stock is being held very closely indicate to us that those who are on the inside know that they have a good thing, and are simply waiting for the railroad to be completed to Goldfield, and put in operation, when, our agent informs us, the mine will begin heavy shipments, and the stock will go soaring skyward. A considerable amount of this stock was sold in New York at prices ranging from three to twelve cents a share. We sold a block of twenty thousand shares at ten cents to Mr. John Dickens, of — W. One Hundred and Twenty-ninth street, four years ago. Hunt him up and get it back at the best figure you can, which should be low, as the mine has been considered a dead one

for the last two years, and information to the contrary is not likely to have reached the East. Buy every share of Red Dog you can locate. You should be able to find considerable, unless the managers of the mine have already been on a still hunt after it, which, of course, is possible.

"Very truly yours,

"JOHN SEFTON.

"Goldfield B. & B. Co."

CHAPTER II.

BOB BUYS TEN THOUSAND SHARES OF RED DOG.

"Gee whizz!" exclaimed Bob Brooks, somewhat excited. "this has all the earmarks of a first-class pointer. I guess it's the real thing." He examined the postmark of the envelope and then read the letter all over again.

On his way back to the office he did some tall thinking.

"I have never heard of that mine before, but it looks as if there was a fortune in Red Dog for anybody owning a good block of that stock when the rise comes. I've a great mind to call on this Mr. Dickens myself. If Mr. Smithers hasn't got ahead of me it is probable I might be able to get the stuff pretty cheap. This letter might be a fake, after all; you can't tell. It's something of a risk to salt one's good money down in a thing of this kind. Even at three cents a share it would cost me a matter of six hundred dollars, and in the end I might find the stock was not worth the paper it was printed on. Well, I'll think it over before I make a move."

Bob delivered the package of securities to Mr. Scrooge.

"Take this note to Mr. Sharpley at the Exchange," said the senior partner.

The boy hurried around to the New Street entrance to the Stock Exchange and pushed his way inside through a crowd of other messenger and A. D. T. boys who were standing there, some on business, while others were bent on skylarking.

One big fellow suddenly put out his foot while another gave Bob a shove; but the boy was up to their tricks, and turning suddenly he grabbed both of the aggressors and jammed their heads together.

Then he went on and accosted the official who stood guard at the rail.

"I want to see Mr. Sharpley," said Bob. "I have a letter for him."

"Give it to me and I'll take it to him," said the man.

"No, I must deliver it personally," answered Bob, in a firm tone.

So the official went out on the floor of the Exchange, hunted Mr. Sharpley up, and brought him to the rail.

Bob's boss took the note, tore it open, read it, and with a nod turned away.

At that moment the boy heard a voice behind him say:

"No, sir; I haven't any Red Dog stock on hand, and don't want any of it. If you are looking up curiosities of

that kind you may pick up a few shares at Scrooge & Sharpley, — Wall Street. And I believe Duncan & Company, — Broad street, have a block of it kicking around their safe. They'll be glad to let you have it at almost any old price. It's a drug on the market. It never was listed on this Exchange, and two years ago it was dropped from the San Francisco and other western exchanges. You are the first person I have heard speak about it since that time. You won't have much difficulty in getting all you want of it if your fancy runs in that direction."

"Thank you, sir; I want a batch of it for a certain purpose, but would not think of paying more than a trifle for it. I will call on the people you have mentioned. If you hear of any more of the stock about I would be glad if you will let me know. There is my card."

"If I learn of any I will send you word, Mr. Smithers," said the broker, glancing at the card.

Then the two men parted, and Bob followed the gentleman by the name of Smithers outside.

At least such was his intention, but his way was blocked by the two boys with whose heads he had taken such a liberty.

They, with a third, had been lying in wait for him with the intention of doing him up a bit by way of revenge.

Bob was not an easy proposition to handle, at any rate, not as easy as they supposed.

So the result was that in the mix-up that ensued, to the delight of the other messengers, the boy who had pushed Bob got a clip in the eye that damaged that member not a little, while his companions retired from the brief fray, one with a bloody nose and the other with a split lip, both injuries the result of a couple of short jabs at close quarters.

When Bob, who had not received a mark, got outside the party by the name of Smithers had disappeared.

He hurried back to the office, fully determined to ask Mr. Scrooge if the firm owned any Red Dog stock, and if so to buy it for himself.

But when he got there he found that the senior partner had gone to a meeting of the directors of the United Gas & Electric Company.

"I'll run down to Duncan & Company, where Phil works, and see if they have any of it. I hope Mr. Smithers won't get there before me."

"Who do you want to see, Bob?" asked his friend Sharpe when Bob marched into the reception-room.

"Is Mr. Duncan in?"

"Yep. Want to see him?"

"Yes."

"All right. I'll take your name in."

In a moment the boy returned and said Mr. Duncan would see him, and Bob walked into the private room.

"Hello, Bob!" greeted Mr. Duncan, who knew the boy well, and had a great liking for him, on account of his breezy, taking ways. "What can I do for you?"

"I'm making a collection of antiques," said Bob, coming directly to the point, "and I thought I'd drop in and see what you have in that line."

Mr. Duncan laughed heartily.

"Antiques, eh?" he said jovially. "Does our office resemble a curiosity shop in any way?"

"No, sir; not at all. What I want is some Red Dog stock. I heard you had a few shares, and I would like to buy them, if you don't ask too much."

"Oh, that's it?" replied the broker, with an amused smile. "Well, you've come to the right shop, so far as that stock is concerned; but I'm afraid I can't sell you a few shares. I'd be glad to get rid of what I have at almost any figure."

"Why not, Mr. Duncan?"

"Because I couldn't sell you less than one thousand shares, as each of the five certificates call for that amount."

"What do you want for it?"

"Well, to tell you the honest truth, Bob, it isn't worth a lot. It cost us three cents a share, and I ought to get two cents for it, though, mind you, I'm not saying it is worth even that. If you want a thousand share certificate to play with you can have it for fifteen dollars cash."

"What is the face value?"

"The par value is fifty dollars a share, so you see I'm offering you fifty thousand dollars' worth of mining stock, on paper, for fifteen dollars in money," and the broker laughed amusedly.

"All right," grinned Bob. "I hate to refuse so liberal an offer. I'll take the five thousand shares at that price if you'll kindly cash a check I have."

"I s'pose that is one of your little jokes, young man?" said Mr. Duncan.

"No, sir. I never joke in the way of business."

"Do I understand that you are serious in this matter?" said the broker, in a tone of surprise.

"Never more so in my life."

"Did Scrooge & Sharpley send you after this stock?" asked Mr. Duncan, beginning to have his suspicions.

"No, sir. I'm buying it for myself," replied the boy promptly.

"Rather a strange thing for you to do, isn't it?" asked the broker, evidently mystified over the matter. "Seventy-five dollars is a lot of money for a boy like you to throw away on Red Dog."

"Well, Mr. Duncan, I have an idea I can get the value of my money out of it."

"You certainly have the reputation among the brokers of being a pretty level-headed boy. If I didn't know you as well as I do I certainly would have my doubts. What do you propose to do with this stock?"

"I should like to be excused from answering that question, Mr. Duncan," said Bob firmly, but politely.

"Of course it's none of my business, but I should prefer not to help you engage in any hair-brained scheme that would make a hole in your bank account."

"Not if I can afford it, sir?"

"Can you afford it, Bob?" asked Mr. Duncan.

"Yes, sir; I've just cleared one thousand dollars in a little deal in P. & D., and here is my check with a statement of my account from Treadwell & Company," said Bob, producing them for the broker's inspection. "But I hope, as a particular favor, that you won't say anything

about it to Mr. Sharpley when you see him, as I don't think he would like to have me dabbling in the market."

"I won't mention the matter. You seem to have been uncommonly lucky, young man, in this little deal of yours. One thousand dollars is a great deal of money for a boy of your years to make by the exercise of his judgment alone. You have a good nerve; but I wouldn't advise you to follow this sort of thing up. You know what the market is without me telling you."

"Well, Mr. Duncan, will you cash that check and take out seventy-five dollars for those five certificates of Red Dog?"

"Certainly, if you are bent on making the purchase; but, glad as I am to get them off my hands, the amount is no object for me to wish to saddle the stuff on you."

"I'm buying them with my eyes open, sir. I don't think you need worry about it."

"Very well."

Mr. Duncan told Bob to indorse the check. Then he took it outside, and presently he returned with the five certificates of the Red Dog Mining Company and \$1,425 in money, which he handed to Bob.

"Thank you, sir; that is all. I am very much obliged to you."

"Don't mention it, Bob. I think the obligation is on my side. I hope you see some way to turn those certificates to account. I have my doubts."

Bob then left him, and stopped in the outer office only long enough to exchange a few words with his friend Phil Sharpe.

As he turned into Wall Street on his way back he overtook Mr. Sharpley, who was returning to the office.

"Have you any Red Dog stock in your possession, Mr. Sharpley?" he asked his boss.

"A little. Why do you ask?"

"I'd like to buy some, if I could get it cheap."

"What use would it be to you, Bob?"

"Oh, I've got an idea in my head."

"That's a great cranium you have, young man. I dare say you've got some scheme for making money out of nothing, for that's about the value of Red Dog stock. We've fifty one-hundred share certificates. You can have them for fifty dollars."

"I'll take them, sir."

His promptness surprised Mr. Sharpley, who said:

"Do you mean that, Bob?"

"Yes, sir; and here's the money to pay for them," and the boy produced his roll and skinned a yellow-back bill off of it.

"You must have come into a legacy by the looks of that wad," said the broker in some surprise as he accepted the bill.

"No, sir; but it's all mine, just the same."

"Mr. Edwards," said Sharpley when they entered the office, "hand me that envelope containing those shares of Red Dog Mining Company from the safe."

The bookkeeper brought the envelope into the broker's room, whither he had gone with his messenger.

"Here you are, Bob; and I hope you'll make something out of them. They are the dearest bit of collateral I guess we ever handled."

"Then you are glad to be rid of the stock, Mr. Sharpley," said Bob, with a grin.

"Well, rather; else you wouldn't be getting it for a cent a share. It cost us four cents."

Bob put his two batches of stock into a long envelope, addressed it to himself, and put it in the office safe.

Then he went to lunch.

CHAPTER III.

A DARING THEFT.

On his way back to the office from the quick lunch establishment he was in the habit of patronizing Bob overtook Kitty Barnes, and another young lady who worked for a law firm in the same building where Scrooge & Sharpley were located.

Kitty introduced her companion to Bob as Miss Stevenson.

"Glad to know you," said the boy, doffing his hat politely.

"This is the smartest boy in Wall Street, Minnie," said Miss Barnes, with a roguish smile.

"Indeed!" replied Miss Stevenson pleasantly, looking at Bob with some interest.

"You mustn't believe all Miss Barnes says," grinned the boy. "She's the greatest jollier in the district."

"Why, Bob Brooks, how dare you make such a statement!" laughed Kitty, shaking a finger at the lad.

"I think Kitty always tells the truth," smiled Miss Stevenson.

"There; now will you be good?" said Miss Barnes.

"I s'pose I'll have to, after that," said Bob; "but if the other boys hear I'm getting such a reputation as that they won't do a thing to me. I guess I had better get my life insured."

"Oh, I won't tell anybody," said Miss Stevenson gaily. "Though I'd love to tell my cousin Phil. He thinks he's the smartest boy in Greater New York."

"I have a friend named Phil—Sharpe is his other name—who thinks he's some pumpkins for a good-sized kid."

"Phil Sharpe!" exclaimed Miss Stevenson. "Why, that's my cousin!"

"You don't say!" ejaculated Bob in surprise. "He works for Duncan & Company on Broad street."

"That's right," nodded the girl. "Cousin Sue, his sister, is an awful sweet girl."

"I know her, all right. They live a block from my house. She and my sisters are chums."

"You have sisters, then?"

"Sure; why not? They work in an infants' wear establishment on University Place, near Washington Square. They're the nicest girls in the world, if I do say it."

"I like to hear a boy talk that way about his sisters," said Miss Stevenson.

"Bob has told me there isn't a girl in the world that can hold a candle to them," chipped in Miss Barnes.

"What, not one?" laughed Miss Stevenson.

"The only one I know of that can spells her name K-i-t-t-y," grinned the boy.

"Go along, you foolish boy!" blushed Miss Barnes.

They had now reached the street entrance to their office building and were about to enter, when Bob noticed a handsomely dressed lady approaching with a black leather satchel in her hand.

At that moment there happened to be but a few people on that side of Wall Street, but the boy noticed that a stocky man, with a soft hat pulled well down over his eyes, and a thick pair of burnside whiskers which covered the greater part of his face, was drawing quickly up behind the lady.

Something in his action struck the boy as being suspicious.

"Say, Kitty, get on to that fellow behind the lady. He seems to be up to something."

The reason for his peculiar behavior was shown in another moment, in fact before the stenographer could open her lips to reply to Bob's remark.

What he did was both sudden and startling, and for an instant took the quick-witted boy off his guard.

The man stepped behind the lady. He threw one arm about her neck, pulling her head back, stifling the scream of terror which rose to her lips. Then he snatched at and secured the satchel she held in her hand.

The instant he got possession of it he released his victim and darted off down the street as fast as he could go, while the lady, with a gasping cry, sank to the sidewalk.

"Gee whizz! Look at that!" exclaimed Bob, when he had recovered from his shock of surprise. "The fellow has actually robbed her here in broad daylight. What an awful nerve. Do something for her, Kitty," he added energetically. "I'm going to catch that rascal if I can," and he started off down Wall Street after the fellow at a speed which showed he was no mean sprinter when he had a mind to put his best foot forward.

The thief, glancing warily over his shoulder, soon saw that he was pursued by a boy who was fleet of foot than himself.

"Stop that man!" yelled Bob to a couple of brokers he knew, who at that moment came out on the sidewalk just ahead of the fleeing rascal.

The thief, however, was wideawake, and dodged them in a twinkling, in fact he was beyond their reach before they comprehended the situation.

As usual, there was not a policeman in sight, and though there are a number of plainclothes men belonging to the police force always on Wall Street, not one was in that immediate vicinity when his services were needed.

The thief darted across the street, when a big man, warned by Bob's shout, tried to intercept him near the corner of Pearl street.

Bob cut across the roadway and rapidly overhauled the crook, whose progress was blocked more or less by the people aroused by the hue and cry, which was now becoming general.

The fellow presently scurried around the corner of the Seamen's Bank and ran up the middle of Pearl street under the shadow of the elevated tracks, disappearing for a moment behind a loaded truck. But he could not shake Bob off.

In a few minutes the boy was right at his heels.

Realizing his predicament, the rascal jumped behind one of the pillars which supports the elevated structure, stopped, and then struck out viciously at his young pursuer.

But Bob was wary, expecting some such demonstration on the part of the thief, and ducked, thereby escaping the blow.

Then as the rascal darted off again he sprang forward and tackled him in regular football fashion about the legs.

The fellow stumbled, lurched forward, and both went down in a heap in front of a warehouse.

Bob, who was as lively as a cat, was up in a twinkling and astride of the thief, who had retained his hold on the satchel.

As a matter of course, a crowd was attracted, and they were soon surrounded.

"Grab hold of this fellow's arms," said Bob to a big teamster.

"What's the matter with him?"

"He's a thief!" replied the boy sharply. "He stole that satchel he has in his hand from a lady in Wall Street."

"You're a liar!" said the fallen crook, struggling in vain to throw Bob off.

Then the boy noticed that the fellow's whiskers were disarranged, and concluding they were false, he laid hold of them, tore them off, and exhibited the false hair before the eyes of the crowd.

"There; you see he was disguised," he said, and all doubt as to the character of the rascal was dissipated in the minds of the onlookers.

"I'll get square with you for this, young fellow," gritted the captured man, glaring malevolently up into Bob's face.

"Get square with nothing," returned the lad fearlessly. "You'll soon be put where such fellows as you belong."

The big teamster now took a hand in the matter and yanked the thief to his feet, while Bob got possession of the satchel.

"Take him into the store and telephone to the station for a policeman," said the boy, and this suggestion was at once acted upon.

Outside the crowd continued to grow and stare in at the chief actors in the lively chase.

In due time an officer appeared, to whom Bob made an explanation of the circumstances.

The thief, however, was in a sullen mood, and refused to say anything.

"You'll have to come to the station and make the charge to the sergeant at the desk," said the policeman to Bob.

"All right," replied the boy promptly. "I'll do it."

"Where's the lady from whom this bag was taken?" asked the officer.

"I left her in charge of two young ladies, one of whom is our stenographer. I work for Scrooge & Sharpley, No. — Wall Street."

"All right. Come along."

The policeman, with the prisoner securely gripped on one side, and Bob marching on the other, headed a crowd of curious people as far as the station, where the chief actors in this dramatic episode lined up before the desk.

Bob was closely questioned by the official in charge, his replies being noted on the blotter.

The prisoner maintained absolute silence.

On the charge of highway robbery being entered against him the fellow was sent below and locked in a cell, to be subsequently conveyed to the city prison on Center street.

Bob, accompanied by the officer who had made the arrest, returned to Scrooge & Sharpley's, where the lady who had been robbed was found in the reception-room talking to Kitty Barnes and Mr. Scrooge.

"What is your name, madam?" asked the policeman, taking out his notebook.

"Mrs. John Dickens."

"Of One Hundred and Twenty-ninth street?" asked Bob in surprise.

"I used to live on that street when my husband was alive," she replied, regarding Bob with not a little interest, "but at present I am living at the Albermarle Hotel."

The officer jotted the fact down.

"You can identify your property, madam?"

"Certainly. Has the man been captured?"

"Yes, madam. This boy ran him down and he has been locked up. Your satchel will be turned over to the property clerk at police headquarters, 300 Mulberry street, and will probably not be returned to you until the case is disposed of. You will be expected to appear at the Tombs police court, together with this young man and the other witnesses, about ten o'clock to-morrow morning."

The policeman then took his leave.

CHAPTER IV.

BOB AND KITTY CONFER ON THE SUBJECT OF RED DOG.

"I should be glad to know your name, young gentleman," said Mrs. Dickens, turning to Bob.

"Robert Brooks."

"Thank you. I am under great obligations to you for recovering my property," she continued, with a grateful smile, "and you may be sure I shall not forget what you have done for me. That satchel contains fifty thousand dollars in money and securities."

"Fifty thousand dollars!" exclaimed Bob.

"That is the amount. I was on the way to the safe deposit vaults to put the securities in my box when I was so unexpectedly attacked. I have no doubt I was followed from the bank."

"Gee! What a haul that fellow would have made if he had got away!"

"Thanks to your alertness and courage, he did not," smiled Mrs. Dickens, admiring the handsome and manly young fellow who had proved so capable of coping with the unpleasant situation. "I think you mentioned One Hundred and Twenty-ninth street a moment ago. Did you know my husband? He has been dead nearly two years."

"No, ma'am, I did not."

"Here is my card," and she handed Bob a small oblong bit of white pasteboard. "Of course, I will see you in court to-morrow morning, but after that I shall insist that you will call upon me at my hotel some evening soon."

"I will be pleased to do so," answered the boy, putting the card in his vest pocket.

"I thank you, also, Miss Barnes, for your kindness in inviting me into this office and thus relieving me of the disagreeable publicity I should have attracted on the street. Also you, sir," to Mr. Scrooge, "for the shelter of your reception-room. I will now take a Broadway car for my hotel."

Thus speaking, the lady bowed and left the place.

"Robert, do you know what Mr. Sharpley did with those certificates of Red Dog mining stock Mr. Edwards handed him before you went to lunch?"

"Yes, sir. He sold them to me for fifty dollars."

"Sold them to you for fifty dollars?" said Mr. Scrooge, evidently surprised. "What do you want with them?"

"I think I can use them, sir."

"So could we at this moment, if we had them," said the senior member of the firm.

"Of course, sir, if you wish me to return them," answered Bob, in a tone of disappointment. "I will do so."

"By no means, Robert. Since you have bought them they are yours absolutely. I merely mentioned it because, after keeping them in the office for nearly two years, I had a customer for them to-day. I could not find them and told him to call in the morning. He offered me five cents a share for the block, so there's a chance for you to make a handsome profit on your purchase. I should certainly advise you to accept it. The stock is really a dead one, with no selling value at all."

"I'll think the matter over, sir," replied Bob, who had not the least intention of letting the stock go, even at the advanced figure.

He judged the customer must be Mr. Smithers.

If he had entertained any doubts before as to the genuineness of the information conveyed in the letter he had found in front of the Continental Trust Building that morning, the evident anxiety of Mr. Smithers to get possession of all the Red Dog stock he could find was sufficient to assure him that he had made a good move in buying those ten thousand shares of the supposed defunct mine.

The only reason he wanted to meet Mr. Smithers was to return him the letter he had lost, which Bob judged it to be his duty to do, though he feared there would be an explosion on the gentleman's part as soon as he understood the boy was familiar with its valuable contents.

"I suppose I did wrong to read it, in the strict sense of the word; but it's too late now to get around that fact. Since I have acquired the information I'm not doing any more than any one else familiar with the value of such a tip would do under the circumstances. There is not a broker in the Street but what would take advantage of any pointer he could get hold of. They wouldn't worry over the means by which they got it. Any way of getting ahead, short of actually putting your hands into a man's pocket is considered perfectly fair in Wall Street. And I dare say there are some methods in practice down here that I wouldn't be guilty of."

"By the way, Bob," said Kitty, when she was putting the cover over her machine that afternoon at four o'clock, preparatory to starting for her home in Brooklyn, "did you put your money in a savings bank yet?"

"Not yet. What's left of it is in the boss' safe."

"What's left of it," repeated the girl, looking at him sharply; "what do you mean by that? You haven't been speculating again so soon, have you?"

"No, Kittie; but I bought ten thousand shares of Red Dog mining stock for one hundred and twenty-five dollars, which I may as well admit is something of a speculation in its way, but from the outlook it appears to be a good deal surer than investing in margins."

"Red Dog mining stock?" said the girl. "What's that? I don't think I ever heard of it."

"Probably not. It's a western mine that's been reported as having been abandoned two years ago, because, I suppose, it didn't pay to work it at the time."

"Where is it situated?"

"Goldfield, Nevada."

"That's a good mining field, I've heard."

"That's right; but there have been a good many wildcat mines started on the strength of the real bonanzas."

"If this Red Dog mine was abandoned it must have been because it was worthless—a wildcat, as you call it. What made you throw one hundred and twenty-five dollars away on its stock? Are you getting crazy all of a sudden, Bob?"

"I hope not, Kitty. If you promise on your word of honor not to say a word to a living soul of what I'm going to show you, you may become as wise as myself on the present outlook of Red Dog."

"I promise to be perfectly mute, Bob," said Kitty, her curiosity all on edge.

"Read this, then," and the boy handed her the Smithers letter.

"Where did you get this?" she asked, after she had read it.

"I found it on the street this morning when Mr. Sharpley sent me to the Continental Trust Company."

"But how can you be certain that this information is reliable?"

"Because I know that Mr. Smithers has been trying to buy some of the stock."

"How do you know that?"

"Mr. Scrooge told me he was here after a block of five

thousand shares the firm has had kicking around for two years back."

"Then he bought it, I suppose?"

"He would have liked to have done so."

"What prevented him? Did Mr. Scrooge ask too much for it?"

"No. The reason was that Mr. Sharpley had sold the lot to me an hour before."

"Oh!"

"Mr. Scrooge didn't know it at the time, but as he could not lay his hand on the stock he told Mr. Smithers to call in the morning."

"Maybe you could sell it to him at an advance," suggested the girl eagerly.

"I know I could, and at five times what I paid for it; but I won't."

"Isn't that foolish on your part, Bob?" asked Kitty, with some concern.

"Not to my way of thinking. If it's worth five cents or more a share to Mr. Smithers, it is worth more to me. I can afford to keep it and watch for developments in the mine."

"Well, perhaps you are right," said the girl, though it was clear she had her doubts about the matter. "You ought to know more about stocks than I. But, honestly, Bob, I wouldn't like to see you get stuck."

"Don't worry about me, Kitty. All I ask is that you remember your promise until I release you from it. The moment this information gets abroad all the brokers will be trying to get hold of some of it. Who knows but what it might go to a dollar a share or over?"

"Wouldn't that be grand!" exclaimed Kitty enthusiastically, for she took as much interest in Bob's enterprise as though it was her own.

"Take Tonopah mines, for instance. Tonopah mining was bid for lately at \$14 a share, Montana Tonopah, \$2.57 a share; Tonopah Midway, \$1.45, and Tonopah Belmont, \$1.20. What's the matter with Red Dog getting into the same company?"

They talked a few minutes longer on the subject and then bade one another good-by for the day.

Next morning Bob, Kitty and Miss Stevenson went to the Tombs police court together, arriving there a little after ten, and they took seats beside Mrs. Dickens, who was already on hand.

The officer who had arrested the man Bob ran down noted their arrival, and spoke to the clerk of the court.

After the lapse of half an hour the prisoner was brought to the bar, where he was joined by a nervy-looking lawyer, who had been retained in his behalf.

Addressing the justice, he said the prisoner waived examination.

The magistrate nodded and spoke to the clerk, while the prisoner was led out of the court and back to his cell.

The policeman then came over to Bob and the party and told them their presence would not be required that day, as the man was remanded, pending action on the part of

the grand jury, before which they would receive due notice to appear and give their evidence.

"If an indictment is found against the man, which is probable, you will be subpoenaed by the District Attorney's office to appear at one of the criminal courts in this building to testify at the trial."

"I should like to recover my property," said Mrs. Dickens. "The satchel contains a large amount of negotiable securities and some money."

"You will have to make application to the District Attorney's office, madam," said the officer, and with that Mrs. Dickens had to be content.

CHAPTER V.

BOB ACQUIRES A HALF INTEREST IN TWENTY THOUSAND ADDITIONAL SHARES OF RED DOG.

Bob politely volunteered to see Mrs. Dickens as far as a Broadway car.

Aside from the courtesy of the act, the boy had an object in view.

They parted from the two girls at the corner of Center and Leonard streets and turned up the latter thoroughfare.

"I would like to ask you a question, Mrs. Dickens," said Bob, with some diffidence.

"You have my permission," replied the lady, somewhat curious to learn what the boy wished to inquire about.

"Can you tell me if your husband, some time before his death, bought a block of twenty thousand shares of the Red Dog Mining Company, of Goldfield, Nevada?"

"He did," replied Mrs. Dickens, with manifest surprise. "Why do you ask?"

"Because I wished to know if you still have that stock in your possession."

"I have," she replied; "but my lawyer has advised me that it is worthless. He said the mine was abandoned by its promoters, that it was nothing but a wildcat enterprise put out to defraud creulous investors. My husband lost two thousand dollars by buying it."

"Then perhaps you would be willing to sell the stock?" asked Bob eagerly.

"Would you buy it?" inquired the lady, in astonishment.

"I should like to, if you would let me have it at a reasonable price."

"Why, Mr. Brooks, I wouldn't think of selling that stock to you. If you want it for any purpose I will gladly present it to you, for it really is useless to me. I made an effort a few months ago to sell it in Wall Street, but couldn't find a broker willing to touch it at any price. I will not only give it to you willingly, but I should be glad to know in what other way I could be of service to you. I owe you something for saving my money and securities yesterday, and I shall not feel satisfied until I have made some return for the service you rendered me."

"It would hardly be fair for me to accept your kind offer, Mrs. Dickens, without letting you know my reasons for desiring to own this Red Dog stock."

"If you want to tell me I shall be glad to listen."

"It is true Red Dog has been, and still is generally regarded as a dead mine. But yesterday I came into the possession of information, apparently reliable, which seems to indicate that paying ore has lately been found in the mine. If this turns out to be true, Red Dog will certainly come into the market again as a stock worth having. While I could not afford to pay over five cents a share for your holdings, and would prefer to get it for less, I should like to get it, on the chance that it might prove a good thing for me in the end."

"You are very honest about it, Mr. Brooks," said Mrs. Dickens, in a pleased tone. "I'm afraid you would not be very successful as a broker if you made a practice of being so candid. May I ask you a question?"

"Certainly."

"As Red Dog stands to-day, could I go down in Wall Street and sell it for five cents a share?"

"I am certain you could not."

"What do you think I could get for it?"

"I don't think you could sell it."

"Then, am I to understand that you value this stock entirely on the basis of the tip you have received—is that it?"

"That is it."

Mrs. Dickens smiled.

"Don't you think that nine persons out of ten would refuse to sell you this stock after you had given them such a hint as the one you have confided to me?"

"I admit that," laughed Bob.

"Would you tell anybody what you told me about this Red Dog, or are you making a special exception in my favor?"

"I don't think I would be so liberal with a man."

"I appreciate the straightforward manner in which you have approached me in this matter, and I must say it does you credit. I believe you are as smart as you are honest, and a boy possessed of two such qualities cannot but succeed in life. I am a reasonably wealthy woman, and the two thousand or two hundred dollars that this Red Dog stock might possibly net me in the future, if your view of the situation proves to be correct, would not add greatly to my happiness, while the knowledge that I had helped you to success would. Therefore I beg you to accept the certificates as a gift freely and gladly tendered to you."

"I will accept them on one condition only, Mrs. Dickens," said Bob.

"And that is?"

"That you will accept one-half of the profits if this stock turns up a bonanza."

"But I don't wish to do that."

"Why not? I am making you a business offer. I possess inside information about Red Dog which I believe to be valuable. If I took all your stock, and it should afterward turn out to be a valuable holding, I should feel as

if I had robbed you. It might be all right in the eyes of Wall Street, but it would not be in mine. Half of your stock will be a fair exchange for my knowledge. When I do business I like to do it on a business basis."

"Well," she replied reluctantly, "if you are determined to have it that way, of course I consent. We are partners, then, in twenty thousand shares of Red Dog," and she smiled pleasantly. "I will send you the certificates tomorrow."

"Thank you, Mrs. Dickens."

"It will be a good excuse for you to call on me, you know. It is quite the proper thing for one to see one's partner once in awhile," she laughed musically.

"Yes," admitted Bob, with one of his captivating grins, "I shall have to see you occasionally to report progress."

Then the boy placed her on a northbound car.

When he returned to the office he found a gentleman, whom he readily recognized as Mr. Smithers, waiting to see him.

He was a big, red-faced man, and Bob thought from the look on his face that something he had eaten that morning disagreed with him.

"Are you Bob Brooks?" he demanded aggressively.

"That's my name. What can I do for you?" said the boy politely.

"Duncan & Company informed me this morning that you purchased five thousand shares of Red Dog mining stock from them yesterday."

"If Mr. Duncan told you that he didn't exceed the truth," said Bob, coolly.

"And now Mr. Scrooge here tells me that you purchased five thousand shares of the same stock from this firm yesterday. I want to know what you want it for?" and Mr. Smithers glowered angrily down on the boy.

"That is a question I must refuse to answer, sir."

"What do you mean?" bellowed the irate visitor.

"I mean you have no right to ask such a question. I don't know you."

"Oh, you don't?" returned the man, with a sneer. "Well, my name is Smithers; do you understand? It's my opinion you found a letter of mine that I lost yesterday morning in the street. You've read that letter, and that's why you bought that stock, you infernal little monkey!"

"If you come up here merely to insult me, Mr. Smithers, you had better get out!" cried Bob angrily.

"I'll go when I get good and ready. I want to know if you found that letter?"

"I did find a letter, probably the one to which you refer; but as the address was missing it was impossible for me to return it to the owner. I found it in the gutter in front of the Continental Trust Company, on Broadway. If it belongs to you I shall be glad to return it to you now," and Bob fished the letter out of his pocket and offered it to Mr. Smithers, who snatched it out of his fingers with a mild oath.

"I am going to have you arrested, do you understand, for stealing that letter!" thundered the enraged visitor.

The violence of his language attracted the attention not only of all the clerks in the office, including the stenographer, but that of Mr. Scrooge, who, visibly annoyed, opened the door of his private room and looked into the reception-room.

"What's the trouble, Robert?" asked the senior partner, glancing at Mr. Smithers in no pleasant way.

"This gentleman seems to be excited, sir," answered the boy, rather indignantly.

"Excited! Well, I should think I ought to be. I've been made the victim of an underhanded piece of rascality, sir, by your employee here. I lost a letter on the street containing information of a confidential nature, do you understand, sir? Private matters only intended for my eye, and this boy has the unparalleled impudence to pick it up and read it—read my letter! Do you hear me, sir?"

"I beg, sir, that you will moderate your voice. You are disturbing the office. If you will step into my private room I may be able to straighten the matter out," said Mr. Scrooge.

Mr. Smithers, after a fierce look at Bob, availed himself of the invitation, and his high-pitched voice was presently heard agitating the atmosphere of the senior partner's office.

"What's the matter with the man?" asked Kitty, as Bob came up.

"He's got a bug," grinned the boy.

"He called to see you, didn't he?"

"I guess everybody in the office knows that by this time."

"What did he want?" insisted the girl, moved by the usual feminine curiosity of the sex.

"If you want to know all my business, Kitty, you had better marry me right off the reel, so none of it will escape you," snickered Bob mischievously.

"Aren't you horrid!" she exclaimed, with a rosy blush. "There's Mr. Scrooge's bell. Now you're in for it," and she clapped her hands gleefully.

"You think I'm up against it, do you, Miss Barnes. I advise you not to fool yourself. It's a cold day when I can't hold my end up."

Then Bob knocked at Mr. Scrooge's door and entered.

CHAPTER VI.

MR. SMITHERS MAKES BOB A REASONABLE OFFER FOR HIS RED DOG CERTIFICATES.

"Robert," said Mr. Scrooge, as the boy came up to his desk, "this gentleman accuses you of making use of information of a confidential nature contained in a letter he dropped accidentally on the street, and which you found. What have you to say about it?"

"I admit the fact. I picked the letter up from the gutter to examine the peculiar device stamped on the envelope. I read the enclosure to pass away time in the waiting-room of the Continental Trust Company, where I had been sent

by Mr. Sharpley, and I had no idea the contents were of an unusual nature until I had finished it. That the letter contained a pointer on the Red Dog mine I admit, and as it came into my possession through pure accident, I claim that I had a perfect right to avail myself of it. I leave it to you, sir, if any broker in the Street wouldn't have done the same thing under the circumstances."

"I think you ought to have returned the letter to Mr. Smithers at once, whatever course you took with reference to its contents."

"I would have done so, but the address was missing," said Bob frankly.

"You mean you tore off the address as an excuse for not doing so," sneered the visitor.

"No, sir; I don't mean any such thing. I handed you the letter just now in the same condition in which it came into my possession."

"I don't believe you. A boy who would read a letter not addressed to him would lie just as soon as not," said Mr. Smithers emphatically.

Bob flushed to his hair at these words, and an angry retort came to his lips, but it was nipped in the bud by Mr. Scrooge, who said:

"That is an unfair remark, Mr. Smithers. There is no evidence that the boy has told an untruth. I assure you his record with us for veracity, not speaking of his other good qualities, is unquestionable."

"Well, he's your boy, and if you have such confidence in him it's none of my business," said Mr. Smithers impatiently. "If he will sell me the certificates of Red Dog he bought of you and Duncan & Company at a slight advance on the price he paid for them, and promise not to say a word about the nature of the information contained in the letter, I'll let the thing go at that," and the big-faced man sat back in his chair as if he had made a very liberal proposition indeed.

"That's fair enough," admitted Mr. Scrooge. "What do you say, Robert?"

"I should like to oblige the gentleman," said Bob cheerfully; "but, under the circumstances, I think I would be a fool to part with those shares. It is possible they may turn out to be a good thing. At any rate, I can afford to keep them until their value is settled one way or the other."

"Do you mean to say you won't sell them to me?" demanded Mr. Smithers angrily.

"That's what I mean," replied the boy stoutly.

"I will give you five cents a share cash for the ten thousand shares. I'll bet you didn't give anything like that for them."

"Five cents is no inducement," answered Bob, much to Mr. Scrooge's amazement, who had long looked upon Red Dog certificates as worthless.

"Well, I'll give you six cents."

"No, sir; I wouldn't take ten cents at this moment."

"Confound you, then, for a cantankerous little monkey. You'll find you have made a mistake in refusing my offer. I'm not a man to be played with. You have skinned me

out of that stock by reading my letter, and I'll get square with you! Just mark my words!"

"Tut! Tut! You should not threaten the boy. He has a right to refuse to sell you that stock if he chooses to do so. It is his property absolutely, and being non-assessable, cannot be taken from him, even by the company. He may be making a mistake in refusing your offer, which strikes me as a liberal one, as far as I can see, but that is his lookout, not yours."

"I will make you one last offer," said Mr. Smithers, rising to his feet. "I will give you eight cents a share for those certificates, and I'm not sure but I am exceeding my instructions in going to that figure; but I will risk it. Is it a go?"

"No, sir; the certificates are not for sale at present," said Bob.

"All right, young man," said the visitor, jamming his hat on his head with a scowl. "You haven't heard the last of this. Perhaps you'll live to be sorry you did not take me up."

"It is possible I may; but I shan't blame you if I do," retorted the boy.

This remark was received by Mr. Smithers with an ugly frown. Then, with a curt nod to Mr. Scrooge he left the office and the building.

"From the fact that you have bluntly refused seven hundred per cent. on the stock you bought of us, I naturally surmise that there have been some unusual developments in the Red Dog mine," said Mr. Scrooge, when the two were alone. "Is that the secret of the letter?"

"Yes, sir."

"Are you sure it is a wise thing to put so much dependence on this information you have acquired?"

"Mr. Smithers' eagerness to pay eight cents for that stock ought to be some evidence that he puts absolute faith in the pointer."

"I dare say you are right. Whatever the developments in Red Dog, no hint has been published so far. Has a fresh lead been opened up?"

"The letter says so, and that the management is now waiting for the railroad which is being built to Goldfield to be completed, when shipments of ore will begin."

"Then I should say you are doing the proper thing to hold on to that stock. If the ore should run well up in the scale Red Dog ought to be worth anywhere from twenty-five cents up in the near future."

Mr. Scrooge then turned to his desk, which was a sign the interview was over.

"It seems to me that you are getting to be a person of considerable importance all of a sudden," said Kitty, when Bob came out of the inner office.

"You mean people are just beginning to realize my value," grinned the boy.

"I see you are growing just as conceited as other boys."

"Thank you for your good opinion, Miss Barnes."

"You are quite welcome to it, Mr. Brooks."

"Oh, come now, Kitty, I can't stand for that."

"You can't expect me to call you plain Bob any more, now that you are developing the big head."

"I didn't notice that my head had swelled any," expostulated the boy.

"Perhaps you had better look in the lavatory mirror and see for yourself."

"Look here, Kitty Barnes, what are you driving at?"

"I'm not saying a word," she answered innocently, continuing to rattle away at the keys of her typewriter.

"Not saying a word! Why, you couldn't keep quiet if the house fell on you!"

"Thank you; you're extremely complimentary."

"You aren't mad, are you?"

Kitty kept her lips closed tightly.

"Why don't you speak?"

Click, click, clickety click went the Remington.

"All right. I was going to offer to take you to the bridge cars to-night; but if you're angry, of course——"

"Don't be foolish, Bob," broke out Kitty, with her eyes on her copy and her deft little fingers on the keys; "of course I'd be glad to have you go along—you know I would, you ridiculous, good-for-nothing boy, so there!"

The stalwart young messenger was apparently satisfied with that, for he said no more, but went into the reception-room and took his seat, ready for anything that might turn up.

CHAPTER VII.

BOB CATCHES ON TO A TIP IN THE SUBWAY.

"That was a bang-up show last night," said Phil Sharpe, when he met Bob the next morning at the One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street underground station, both the boys being bound downtown for business.

"First-class," replied his friend, who had treated to seats at Proctor's uptown playhouse.

"I'm dead gone on that Miss Sylvester who did the skipping-rope dance."

"Are you?" grinned Bob; "well, don't let her husband hear of it."

"Her husband!" ejaculated Phil, with a blank look.

"Sure. That was her husband—the fat man who did the juggling turn."

"How do you know that?"

"They were both in the cigar store near Seventh avenue, where the big Washington statue is, night before last while I was getting a shave in the rear, and the head barber told me who they were."

"You were getting a what?"

"A haircut," grinned Bob.

"You said a shave," insisted Phil.

But an express rolled in at that moment, and the boys rushed for a seat.

"You know Jones, our cashier?" said Phil, as he turned to the baseball news in his paper.

"Yes; what about him?" asked Bob.

"He's telling it all around that he's acquired a third interest in a yacht."

"Duncan ought to watch him, then."

"Why so?"

"He might become a full-fledged skipper."

"Haw, haw haw!" laughed a fat man next to Bob, who had got on to the joke.

Phil turned around and stared at him.

"Say," he whispered to Bob, "what ails that fellow?"

"Something hit his risible faculties and lodged there," grinned Bob. "Didn't you see it?"

"See what?"

"Say, Phil, you're like the atmosphere in this tunnel."

"How's that?"

"You're rather dense."

"Stop your kidding."

"I'm not kidding. I said you were dense, and I can prove it."

"How can you?" demanded Phil aggressively.

"Because you can't tell me the highest office within the gift of the American people."

"Oh, any fool knows that."

"Well, what is it, smarty?"

"The presidency, of course."

"You're wrong. The highest office is the weather signal station on Pike's Peak."

"Haw, haw, haw!" snickered the fat man again.

"Bob Brooks, you make me weary," snorted Phil in a tone of disgust.

Then he turned his back to his friend and began to read the scores.

"That wasn't so bad, young man," chipped in the fat man, digging him in the side with his elbow.

"Not quite as bad as a rotten egg," retorted Bob, who resented the punch.

The fat man subsided.

Bob opened his own paper and turned to the financial news.

Several passengers, including the fat man, got out at Forty-second street, and others took their places.

A couple of prominent politicians sat down next to Bob.

They began talking together in a low tone about a legislative deal then in progress.

"The bill is sure to go through, in spite of the newspapers and the citizen's committee, which has gone to Albany to protest against it. I've got the tip right from headquarters. What you want to do now is to buy all the Consolidated Gas you can pay for in the next day or two. It is 180 this morning and feverish. This time next week, mark my words, it will pass the 200 mark. Now, remember, not a word to anybody about this, but go right in and buy for all you're worth."

And Bob Brooks' sharp ears heard every word of that pointer, and it set him to thinking.

He looked at Consolidated Gas in the transactions of the Stock Exchange, and saw it had fluctuated the preceding day from 179 to 181 and closed at 180.

"I've a great mind to put my little pile into it. This

man next to me is evidently in touch with the situation at Albany. Let me see—how many shares could I buy on a ten per cent. margin?"

He figured it out that it would cost him \$1,375 to get seventy-five shares.

"And my roll foots up \$1,375. I guess I'll do it, if I can get it at 180."

Along about eleven o'clock Mr. Scrooge sent him to the Exchange with a note for Mr. Sharpley, and on his way back Bob stopped in at Treadwell & Company and asked them to buy seventy-five shares of Consolidated Gas at 180, and put up his money like a little man.

From that moment Bob took a sudden interest in the political situation at the State capital, and the next morning he noticed that Consolidated Gas had risen to 182.

In the meantime Mrs. Dickens, true to her word, sent him the forty Red Dog certificates, representing twenty thousand shares of the mining stock, and Bob put them in the office safe, along with the shares he had already acquired.

Thus he controlled thirty thousand shares of the mine, though actual owner of but twenty thousand.

A couple of days later, while the gas legislation at Albany was still undecided, though the bill had been passed by the Senate and sent back to the Assembly, in consequence of which Consolidated Gas had advanced to 186, and was extremely buoyant at that, he received a note from Mrs. Dickens, as follows:

"Albermarle Hotel, Sept. 21, 190—.

"Dear Mr. Brooks: A gentleman named William Smithers called on me yesterday with reference to those certificates of Red Dog Mining stock. He had been up to One Hundred and Twenty-ninth street looking for Mr. Dickens, of whose death he was unaware. When he found I had moved from there he took measures to hunt me up, and finally located me at this hotel. He wanted to buy the stock, and finally offered me as high as eight cents a share for it. Then I referred him to you, as my representative for the stock, thinking you might consider it advisable to make the sale, for I think the figure very liberal. When I mentioned your name and address I thought the man would have a fit. I can't imagine what ailed him. He said nothing more, but took his departure at once. You will, of course, use your own judgment as to whether you will sell the stock or not if this gentleman should call on you. I have perfect confidence in your business sagacity. Hoping you will soon find the time to call on me, I remain,

"Very sincerely yours,

"CLARA DICKENS."

"Gee! I don't wonder Smithers had a fit. I've headed him off from about all the Red Dog there is in New York. I'll bet he's mad enough to do me up, if he could get the chance. I doubt if I'd take a certified check from him to-day for an amount covering my holdings at twenty-five cents a share."

That afternoon there was a short item in the Globe which

hinted at developments in the forgotten Red Dog mine at Goldfield, Nevada, and the probability that the stock might be listed again on the western exchanges.

Kitty saw it and pointed it out to Bob.

"Looks as if things were coming our way, doesn't it?"

"Yes," replied the boy, looking pleased. "But I scarcely expected anything would leak out through the papers yet awhile. That item will start a number of interested persons on a still hunt for corroborative evidence, and then before long everybody will know that Red Dog has come on earth a second time."

Bob cut the item out and mailed it to Mrs. Dickens, with a few words acknowledging the receipt of her note.

CHAPTER VIII.

BOB'S COUP IN CONSOLIDATED GAS.

Next morning Bob was stopped on Broad street by Mr. Duncan, who was on his way to the Stock Exchange.

"The day after you bought those Red Dog certificates from me a man came into our office and inquired for the stock. I told him we had just sold the batch we had had on hand for over a year. He wanted to know who had bought the stock, and thinking there might be something in it for you, I sent him up to your place. Did you see him?"

"I saw him, all right," grinned Bob. "His name is Smithers. He wanted the stock so badly that he offered me five cents a share for it."

"The dickens you say!" exclaimed Mr. Duncan, in a tone of surprise. "Of course you sold it to him and raked in a pretty little profit on your deal?"

Bob shook his head.

"No, I didn't sell it to him."

"Why, how is that? You say he offered you five cents a share."

"He did better than that, after I refused to take it. He raised the ante to eight cents."

"You're joking, young man," said the broker, incredulously.

"If you don't believe me you can ask Mr. Scrooge. The offer was made in his presence."

"The man must have been crazy."

"He was crazy mad when I wouldn't take him up."

"Do you mean to say that you refused eight cents a share?" almost gasped Mr. Dunstan.

"That's what I did, not only for the five thousand I bought of you, but for another block of five thousand I got from our firm."

"Bob Brooks, is there anything the matter with your gray matter?" asked the broker, looking at the boy as if he thought him a fit candidate for Bloomingdale.

"Not to my knowledge," replied Bob coolly.

"Well, you're a conundrum. How can you expect to make any such sum as that out of those certificates? What scheme have you got in your mind's eye?"

"I think Red Dog is a good stock to own about this time."

"What are you handing me out, Bob Brooks?" asked the broker, apparently mystified.

"I'm not handing you out anything—merely answering your question."

"Did you see that item in yesterday's Globe about Red Dog?" asked Bob.

"No; what did it say?" asked Mr. Duncan, with a sudden show of interest.

"It said that the mine shows signs of coming to life again."

"I guess that's only a newspaper yarn. You can't put any dependence on such reports."

"Not unless they are corroborated. Do you want a tip, Mr. Duncan?"

"I'm always glad to accept one, if it's good for anything," replied the broker, with a humorous smile. "But anything valuable is seldom allowed to go at large."

"That's no dream, sir. My tip's this—and it isn't at all funny, either, whether you think so or not—buy Red Dog if you see any of it floating around loose."

"I will if you guarantee to take it off my hands right away," he said, as though the idea struck him as a good joke.

"That's a bargain," said the boy, with a promptness that rather staggered him. "That is, provided you won't ask more than I can afford to pay."

"And what can you afford to pay?" asked the broker, with a grin.

"Five cents a share is my limit at present."

Just then a couple of barelegged newsboys came running down the street shouting:

"Extry! Full account of the gas deal at Albany! Extry!"

Mr. Duncan bought a copy, and so did Bob.

"Too bad!" ejaculated the broker, as he glanced rapidly over the scare-head. "That infernal Remsen bill has passed the Assembly, and will now be sent to Mayor McClellan. The gas trust has carried everything before it. I've got to get on the floor. This news will send Consolidated kiting upward."

Mr. Duncan bolted in the door of the Exchange, while Bob, on the impulse of the moment, rushed up to the visitor's gallery.

The news had already spread around the Exchange, and Consolidated Gas was the center of a fierce commotion.

A dozen brokers were trying to buy the stock, and the price mounted half a point at a time, and sometimes a whole point.

It went to 192, an advance of six points, before a lull came in that section of the floor.

"That's the quickest money I ever made in my life—\$450 in about ten minutes," muttered Bob to himself, as he leaned over the railing and watched the scene of excitement below. "Altogether I'm nine hundred dollars ahead of the game up to this point. If both the mayor and the governor sign the bill I ought to get double that

amount; but if one or the other should turn it down my profits would vanish like a snuffed-out candle flame."

Feeling that he had wasted too much of his boss' time on his own personal account, Bob hurried back to the office.

He was kept pretty well on the run that forenoon, but he managed to get frequent peeps at the stock indicator in the office, and thus kept in touch with the stock in which he was interested.

"If you've looked at that tape once you've looked at it a dozen times this morning," laughed Kitty as she was putting on her hat to go to lunch. "I hope you haven't been so foolish as to go into the market again," and she regarded Bob with a very severe look.

"You certainly do take a great deal of interest in my business affairs," said the boy, as he grabbed her two hands and held them prisoners. "I have gone into the market again, Miss Want-to-know-it-all. I've soaked a little pile in good old Consolidated Gas at 180, and it is now 194, so what have you got to say about it?"

"Why, when did you do that?"

"Three or four days ago."

"And you never said a word to me about it, you close-mouthed boy!" with a pout.

"Oh, I didn't dare. I was afraid you wouldn't do a thing to me!" laughed Bob.

"And I thought you had put that money in a savings bank."

"Well, you know what thought did," grinned the boy mischievously.

"Go along, you ridiculous boy! But what about this gas stock—how came you to buy that?"

"Got a pointer. A real, simon-pure, kiss-me-quick, iron-clad tip, and you can bet I wasn't letting a snap like that go by me."

"You say you're ahead, then?"

"Sure I am—fourteen points to the good. I'm always on the water wagon, and that leads the procession every time, and don't you forget it."

"You are a lucky boy, aren't you?" she said admiringly.

"There are others, Kitty. I'll bet there'll be a mob of gilt-edged politicians at the Hoffman Cafe this afternoon and to-night opening bottles of champagne to beat the band."

"Are you going to join them?" she asked mischievously.

"I'm going to do better than that. As soon as I sell out my illuminating stock I'm going to take you around to Del's and give you a swell dinner."

"No, you're not," said the girl. "I wouldn't allow you to spend money in any such foolish way as that. I would not dare go there, anyway. If you want to treat me to ice-cream soda or just plain ice cream I'll let you; but that's the limit."

"All right; you're the doctor."

Then Kitty went to lunch.

During the ensuing week there was so much opposition developing against the gas grab, as it was stigmatized, and so much pressure brought against Mayor McClellan in order to have him veto the bill, that Bob got nervous, and

hesitated about holding on to his stock, which fluctuated around 193.

Finally the mayor signed the bill, when everybody thought he would not, and an awful howl went up from the yellow journals in consequence.

But something else also went up that was more satisfactory to Bob, and that was his stock.

The moment the news came out that the mayor had affixed his signature to the bill Consolidated stock jumped with greater buoyancy than ever.

It reached 200 by the closing of the Exchange that day.

The bill was now up to the governor.

Would he veto it?

He was a Republican, while the mayor was a Tammany Democrat.

It would be a feather in his political cap to turn it down.

"Shall I chance it?" figured Bob. "If I sell now my profit on the deal will be \$1,500. A bird in the hand is worth two in the blackberry bush. I guess I'll sell out now."

There was nothing vacillating about Bob's nature.

Once he had decided upon a course of action he put it through without flinching.

So next morning he called on Treadwell & Company and told them to sell his gas stock at the ruling price, and ten minutes afterward the stock had passed out of his control.

It was well that he got rid of the stock, for it never went higher than a fraction of a point, and in due time the governor vetoed the bill, and a number of get-rich-quick politicians were caught on the toboggan and were pinched pretty severely.

While the astute Bob Brooks, having got out from under at the right moment, had something like \$2,600 standing to his credit in the bank. He signalized this coup by buying his mother and sisters each a new fall outfit, from hat to shoes. He also laid in a new suit and other wearing apparel for himself.

As for Kitty, she had ice cream and soda until she finally had to call a halt.

CHAPTER IX.

BOB GOES THE LIMIT ON C. H. AND D.

During the first week of October Bob and Mrs. Dickens were summoned before the grand jury to give evidence against the man who had committed the assault and robbed her of her satchel on Wall Street.

Bob, of course, was the star witness, and his account of the chase and capture of the crook convinced the jurors that the rascal could be convicted when brought to trial, so they returned an indictment against him for highway robbery.

When Bob got back to the office that day he found a letter awaiting him.

It was from Mr. Smithers, offering him ten cents a share

for the entire holdings of himself and Mrs. Dickens, or, in other words, three thousand dollars cash.

"Not on your life!" soliloquized Bob, after he had read it. "There was a two-inch item in this morning's Times about Goldfield, and the writer said that the Red Dog mine was beginning to attract attention again out there. Wouldn't I be a silly to sell out now? I guess yes. I'm going to see my pointer out, if it takes all winter, and next year on top of that. Mr. Smithers wouldn't offer ten cents for a pig in a poke. He knows that the information in that letter was the real thing. On the strength of that I'm going to hold on with a patent, copper-fastened grip. When the railroad reaches Goldfield perhaps we shall see what we shall see."

So Bob sat right down then and there and replied to Mr. Smithers, telling him he was not selling Red Dog just at present, but when he was he would be glad to let him know.

"He won't like this when he gets it, I know," muttered the boy when he addressed the envelope, "but, then, I'm not in this business for the benefit of Mr. Smithers."

Two days afterward he got a reply from the big, red-faced man.

"I'll give you one last chance to close out your stock, and as a further inducement I'll make the price twelve cents," ran the note. "Should you refuse this there'll be something doing, my young friend. You don't know what you're up against. Because the easiest way's the best is the reason I raise the ante—but that's the limit. If you know when you're well off you'll take it. There are some people in this world who don't know enough to go in when it rains. I hope you ain't one of them. A nod is as good as a wink to a blind horse."

It was signed "William Smithers."

There was an implied threat in the letter, but it did not frighten the Wall Street boy worth a cent.

More than one broker had remarked that he was a hard boy to beat.

At any rate, you could not beat him out of a good thing.

And the boy believed he had a good thing in Red Dog.

Bob went to the bookkeeper for a stamp to put on the letter he had written to Mr. Smithers, when Mr. Scrooge's bell rang.

"I suppose you're going out?" said the bookkeeper, as he handed him the stamp. "You might as well mail these at the corner," and he handed the boy half a dozen stamped and addressed envelopes.

Bob took them, and then went in to see what the senior partner wanted him to do.

"Take this to Mr. Butler, 31 Nassau street," and the man passed over a big envelope to his messenger.—"Wait for an answer."

Mr. Butler was a well known capitalist, and he occupied a splendid suite of offices in the big building.

Bob took an express elevator to the tenth floor, where he got off and walked down the corridor, turning to his right, till he came to a glass door on which was painted—"Howard Butler."

He opened the door and walked in.

It was a large room, with a brass railing at the further end, behind which sat three good-looking young ladies working busily at their Remingtons.

One of the girls came forward and asked Bob what he wanted, and he said he had a letter for Mr. Butler and expected an answer.

"I will take it to him," said the girl, and she disappeared into an inner room. The boy walked over to the window and looked out into a big areaway, whence he caught a glimpse of a score or more clerks and typewriters working away in the various offices that also opened on to the air-shaft.

While thus employed several persons came into see Mr. Butler, and were told to wait until the capitalist was disengaged.

Two of these visitors took up their station within ear-shot of Bob and began a low conversation.

"I've managed to pick up sixteen thousand shares of the stock in small batches since I got the order to buy all I could of it," said one of the men, who was evidently a broker, though Bob did not remember having seen him before, and he knew most of the big fellows by sight.

"I think Brown & Company have some," said his friend. "You might ask them."

"I will. I want to get all that I can before I go on the floor and begin to bid for it."

"I understand. You ought to get some on the Street. C. H. & D. is a staple article, and you ought to pick up a good bit floating around. Do you know who are in this combination to boost this stock?"

"No, I don't. And if I did I wouldn't be saying anything. I'm giving you the tip to buy solely because you are my brother-in-law, and I want you to promise that you'll give Sis a good stake out of your winnings."

"What are you paying for the stock to-day?"

"Fifty-two. I guess it'll be higher to-morrow. At any rate, it won't be any lower for some time to come. The moment we begin to buy on the Exchange it will attract notice to the stock and it will commence to go up. You may expect to see it fluctuate a bit at first, as we shall want to shake off as many of the early buyers as we can and get their stock. I advise you to go to your limit on this, Rogér, on a ten per cent. margin."

"I'll take your advice, Joe, and attend to it at once."

At that moment the young lady who attended to the callers motioned to Bob, and he had to leave the window.

However, he had obtained all the information he could have desired.

Evidently C. H. & D. stock was about to be cornered by some powerful clique, who had hired this broker, among others, to buy in the stock for them.

So when Bob got the reply he was to carry back to Mr. Scrooge his head was full of the C. H. & D. scheme, and before he reached the office he determined to go into the deal himself on his own little hook.

"I have \$2,600 lying idle in the bank that might just as well be working for me as not," he mused, as he walked

rapidly on. "That broker said the stock was selling at 52. I can buy five hundred shares at that figure on a ten per cent. margin."

When he went to lunch at twelve-thirty he drew his money from the bank, carried it to Treadwell & Company, where he had come to be recognized as a very successful small speculator, and put it up on C. H. & D.

When he got back to the office again he showed the receipt to Kitty with a laugh.

"You see I'm in it head over heels again."

"Another tip?" laughed the girl. "Look out, Bobby. The pitcher that goes to the well may go there once too often and get broken."

"Well, you just keep your eye on C. H. & D. from this out. Every point it goes above 52 means five hundred dollars in my pocket."

"And every point it goes below 52 means——"

"Never mind that, Kitty. I make it a point never to look on the dark side of a picture."

"It makes me nervous to think you have risked so much money on a single stock transaction. It's every cent you had, too, wasn't it?"

"That's right. When I think I have a good thing I go the whole thing, otherwise I leave the thing entirely alone."

"There's Mr. Scrooge's bell. Run along, little fellow," laughed Kitty.

CHAPTER X.

THE ABDUCTION OF BOB BROOKS.

Now that Bob had gone into the market again his thoughts naturally were much taken up with the fluctuations of C. H. & D.

For the next few days the stock hovered around 52.

When the Exchange closed on Saturday noon, the third day after he bought the stock, the price had reached 58 and a fraction.

"Well, I'm seven hundred dollars to the good, anyway, leaving out the matter of commission, which will be \$125 when I come to sell."

Brokers charge one-eighth of one per cent. for each one hundred shares of stock purchased for a client, and a similar amount for selling the same.

It was a cold, drizzling afternoon, and Bob, instead of going off somewhere with Phil, as was his custom, took the Third Avenue "L" at Fulton street, to Ninth street, and went to the Cooper Union reading-room, where he put in several hours reading the current magazines.

He reached his home in West One Hundred and Seventeenth street in time for supper, and then he went out to the butcher's and the grocer's to make sundry purchases for his mother.

At nine o'clock there came a ring at the bell of their flat.

"I wonder who that is at this hour?" asked Nellie Brooks, looking up from a book she was reading. "Push in the button, Bob."

The boy went into the kitchen and pushed in the knob that opened the front door.

In a moment the bell rang again, more vigorously than before.

Bob pushed in the button again, but in spite of that the bell rang a third time.

"Maybe that's Phil and he won't come up; I'll go down, Nellie."

He put on his hat and scooted down the two flights of stairs, for the Brooks family lived on the third floor.

It was raining at a pretty lively rate, and a man with a soft hat pulled down over his eyes stood in the vestibule.

"Are you Bob Brooks?" he asked when the boy opened the inside door.

"That's my name. Was it you rung our bell just now?"

"Yes; Mr. Sharpley is in the carriage outside and wants to see you."

"Mr. Sharpley!" exclaimed the boy, in no little astonishment.

Stock brokers were not in the habit of hunting up their messenger boys, except under distinctly unusual circumstances.

"Something's up, sure pop!" he muttered, as he ran out on the walk and over to the carriage door.

The man followed close at his heels.

"Here he is," he said to the occupant of the vehicle, opening the door.

"Step in, Bob," said a voice, which he did not recognize as Mr. Sharpley's.

He put one foot on the step and then paused, as if in doubt.

The man outside gave him a shove that sent him against the person inside, and quickly slamming the door, the man mounted the box and drove hurriedly toward Eighth avenue.

The person inside had caught Bob around the neck, and before the boy could make any effectual resistance against this rough treatment a handkerchief which gave forth a pungent odor was pressed over his mouth and nostrils.

Bob had now awakened to the fact that he was the victim of a ruse to get him into the carriage, though for what purpose he could not exactly understand.

Naturally he began to struggle to extricate himself from the iron grip of the unknown in the carriage.

He was not an easy proposition to handle under ordinary circumstances, for steady gymnastic and baseball exercise had hardened and developed his muscles, and as he always looked carefully after his general health he was in good physical shape.

But he had been taken at a disadvantage to begin with, and now the fumes of a strong chloroform solution were sapping both his strength and his senses.

The result of it all was that every moment rendered him less capable of holding out.

Finally his head fell back, and he lay like a log in the man's arms.

Propping his victim up in the seat, the stranger threw open both windows of the swiftly moving vehicle, which

had by this time turned into One Hundred and Twenty-fifth street and was speeding westward.

"Phew!" exclaimed the man, as he stuck his head out of the window. "I thought the stuff would fetch me, as well as him."

The cool breeze and the cold rain splashing on to his face speedily revived the stranger.

At that instant a big arc light in front of a saloon threw the man's countenance in full relief.

It was the face of Mr. William Smithers.

The carriage passed the brilliantly-lighted West End Theater, and soon afterward turned into Manhattan avenue, keeping straight on toward the Fort Lee ferry.

A boat was in, and so the driver, after he had paid the fare, drove the carriage on board.

By that time Mr. Smithers, having rid the carriage of the fumes of the drug, had closed the windows tight again, so that, had curious eyes sought to penetrate the interior of the vehicle, no one could have guessed whether it carried even a single passenger.

In a few minutes the boat pulled out from its dock, and in a short time had crossed the river and was made fast to its berth on the other side.

Then the carriage slowly drove on shore, and started off on one side of the trolley road.

This road it followed for a matter of four or five miles, till the lights of Hackensack hove in view, when the driver turned to the left along the highway which skirts the river.

Two or three miles below the carriage crossed the Hackensack river on a short bridge, which landed the vehicle right on to the meadows. Then the driver slowed down to a walk, as though feeling his way forward in the darkness and the rain.

The horses splashed and floundered in the soft muck, dotted with innumerable pools of water, every once in awhile striking tolerably hard ground, until it finally came to a stop before a dark, unsavory-looking building.

A dismal house it was when, as on this occasion, the cold wind swept the blinding rain across the Hackensack meadows.

The rising tide flapped monotonously among the reeds and flags which grew upon the banks of the near-by stream, a sluggish branch of which flowed immediately under the rear windows of the rickety-looking building itself.

The driver descended from his perch and opened the carriage door.

"Here we are, Mr. Smithers."

"All right. Thump on the door and rouse up Mr. Grubb."

It looked as though they had been expected, for a smart knock brought an elderly man and a light to the front door.

"Lend a hand, Hubbard," said Mr. Smithers sharply.

Between the driver and the big, red-faced man the unconscious Bob Brooks was taken from the carriage and carried up the short, rickety steps and into the house, when

Mr. Grubb closed the door and piloted them to a very plain-looking apartment in the rear.

A brisk fire was burning in the grate of an old-fashioned cooking stove, on top of which a tea-kettle was singing its cheery song.

Bob was placed in a chair so that he leaned up against one of the walls of the room.

"Hocussed, eh?" remarked Mr. Grubb, jerking his thumb toward the boy.

"Correct," answered Mr. Smithers grimly. "Now let us have a hot drink, if you please. I see the kettle is boiling."

Mr. Grubb proceeded at once to brew a bowl of whisky punch, at which he seemed an adept.

It was soon ready, and the man Hubbard, who had experienced a long and wet drive, and expected presently to face another on his way back to New York, seized his mug and drank the stuff with greedy relish.

By the time he had put a couple more under his belt he was warm and dry again and ready to go.

Mr. Smithers handed him a twenty dollar bill, and also a five-spot, and then the burly driver, pulling his oiled coat around him, was accompanied to the door and there dismissed by Mr. Grubb.

"We'll take the boy upstairs now and let him sleep off the drug," said Mr. Smithers, when his elderly accomplice returned to the room.

And between them they carried Bob to a room above, laying him upon a miserable bed in an equally miserable-looking room.

CHAPTER XI.

IMPRISONED ON THE HACKENSACK MEADOWS.

It was a dark, drizzling Sunday morning when Bob Brooks awoke from his stupor in the dilapidated house in the midst of the Hackensack meadows.

He lay for some time staring up at the cracked and broken ceiling of the room without the least realization of where he was.

Then, as his senses gradually began to take definite shape, he fancied he must be dreaming, for certainly this did not resemble his own room at home.

This must be the continuation of a previous dream—his struggle in the carriage and various other disjointed recollections of an unpleasant nature.

Suddenly he sat up and looked around.

Was this a dream?

If it was it certainly was unusually realistic.

He heard the rain beating on the roof and against the dirty window-panes.

And he could hear the wind sighing around the corners of the building.

Then he noticed that he was fully dressed.

"Gee! What am I up against, anyway?" he muttered in a mystified way.

He got up and made his way to the window.

"Where the dickens am I, and how came I here?"

The dismal landscape was lost in an ocean of mist and rain, but he could make out the turbid water of the creek that gurgled beneath the window.

Then the startling reflection came to him that the struggle in the carriage had been no dream, but a stern reality.

He had been drugged to unconsciousness, and this was the rude awakening.

"This is fierce!" he exclaimed. "I wonder what it all means?"

He glanced about his room.

It was in the last stages of dilapidation.

A shaky bed, held together with coarse white twine, such as comes about baled hay, and a solitary stool.

Of course it was not long before Bob did the most natural thing under the circumstances, that is, he walked up to the door and tried to open it.

He discovered that it was locked, or otherwise fastened, on the outside.

He was a prisoner beyond a doubt.

"I wonder why I have been brought to this dismal place, and for what purpose?" he muttered in a far from cheerful tone of voice.

As he had not the slightest idea who his abductors were, of course he had to remain in the dark until something transpired.

He drew his stool close up to the window, and amused himself with all sorts of guesses as to the locality of his prison.

By and by the rain ceased and the mist thinned out, allowing him a longer range of vision.

As far as his eye could reach he saw only water-soaked meadow land, that looked more like a marsh than anything else, broken by the near-by stream and the creek that branched toward the house.

Fully two hours passed away, which seemed an endless interval to the boy, before he heard a sound to indicate that the house was occupied by any one else beside himself.

Then he heard somebody moving around in the room beneath.

Bob thumped with his heels on the floor to attract the person's attention.

He was successful, for in a few minutes there were steps on the creaky staircase, which communicated with a landing outside.

It was a slouching gait which brought the man to the door, where he paused to undo a padlock before he could enter.

"Hello, sonny," said Mr. Grubb, poking his face into the room, with a weary grin on his unshaven phiz. "You have come to your senses, I see."

"I guess I have," said Bob, in an aggressive mood, rising quickly from the stool and starting for the door. "I want to know why I was brought here."

"Keep your distance," said Mr. Grubb, hastily, "or I'll shut the door again," and he made a movement to retire.

"Don't go," said Bob, stopping short in the middle of the floor. "I want to talk with you."

"I ain't sure whether I ought to talk with you or not," replied the man.

"You can tell me why I was brought here and where I am, can't you?"

Mr. Grubb shook his head.

"You'll find that out by and bye."

"But I want to know now," persisted the boy eagerly.

"I ain't got no orders to tell you nothing," answered Mr. Grubb.

"But you know all about it, don't you?"

"I don't know nothing about what don't concern me," said the man cautiously.

"Who does, then?"

"Then man who brought you here."

"And who is he?"

"He'll introduce himself when he gets ready."

Bob saw that the man did not intend to be communicative.

"Will you bring me a drink of water?" he asked. "My mouth and throat feel like a furnace, and I've got a headache."

"I'll get it for you."

Mr. Grubb shut and secured the door again, and Bob heard him shuffling down the stairs.

"It seems pretty hard to get any light on the situation," mused the boy, not at all pleased with the short interview.

In a few minutes Mr. Grubb ascended the stairs with a pitcher of water and a cracked glass, which he passed into the room and then went away again.

Another half hour elapsed and the old man came up with a cup of coffee, a plate of bread, and some cold meat.

"Here's your breakfast," he said briefly, and shutting the door he went away again.

Bob was hungry enough to eat everything in sight, and lost no time in doing so.

By this time the mist had dispersed entirely, and the boy caught an unobstructed view of the trackless meadows stretching away northward, with a distant sight of the outskirts of Hackensack.

The sky was still lowering, and threatened a renewal of the rain.

Bob had never been in that section of New Jersey before, so that what he saw did not enlighten him much as to his whereabouts.

Of course he had heard of the Hackensack meadows, but it did not occur to him that it was amidst those marshy lands that he was cooped up.

It would not have done him any good, anyway, if he had recognized the locality, as there seemed to be no immediate prospect of him getting away.

He put in a long and dreary morning in fruitless speculation.

About eleven o'clock he heard steps coming up the staircase again.

Not the shuffling feet of Mr. Grubb, but the firm and heavy tread of a big man.

Bob believed that this person was coming to see him, and it was with a sensation of expectation and relief that he waited for his visitor.

It is always better to know the truth, however unpleasant, than to worry oneself over an uncertainty.

The padlock was unloosened and the door opened, admitting an individual whose mere presence, before he had opened his mouth even, threw a sudden gleam of intelligence upon the situation, for the instant Bob recognized the ponderous form of Mr. William Smithers it was as if a veil had fallen from before his eyes, and he saw a reason for what previously had been so mystifying to him.

"Well, my intelligent young friend," began the red-faced man sardonically, "we meet again, though under circumstances not quite so agreeable, to you at least, as those of our former interview."

Bob looked hard at him, but did not open his mouth.

"You must thank your thick head for this unpleasant condition of affairs," continued Mr. Smithers, as he drew near to the boy. "You would not take my warning, and so I have been put to the trouble of going to this extreme."

"I don't see what you expect to gain by this high-handed outrage, Mr. Smithers," said Bob, full of fight. "You have laid yourself open to criminal proceedings by abducting me from my home."

"I expect to gain my point," said the man, with a grim smile. "I guess I hold the trump hand now, my young friend, and so I propose to compel you to come to terms."

"It takes two to make a bargain."

"That's right; and as there happens to be two of us in this room we ought to be able to reach one without any great trouble."

"You can't make me give up my Red Dog stock unless I chose to, and that's what you're after, I know."

"That's exactly what I'm after, and I think you'll give it up, all right, before I get through with you."

"Perhaps you think I'm easily managed," said Bob, defiantly.

"Oh, there are more ways than one of killing a cat, and one of them ought to fetch you," said Mr. Smithers darkly.

"You don't imagine I carry that stock around with me," said Bob, with a sneer.

"Hardly," replied Mr. Smithers, cheerfully. "It is probably in the safe at Scrooge & Sharpley's."

"Then I don't see——"

"An order from you, presented by me in person the first thing to-morrow morning, will answer all purposes."

"And you expect I will sign such an order?" astonished at the man's nerve.

"Certainly."

"Well, I won't."

"Then I'll have to put the screws on, my young friend," said Mr. Smithers, striking the floor with his heel several times. "Birds that can sing and won't sing must be made to sing—see?"

And Bob did not relish the way that he said it.

CHAPTER XII.

THE HEMPEN NECKLACE.

Shuffling steps on the staircase soon announced the approach of Mr. Grubb.

He was coming in answer to Mr. Smithers' signal.

When he entered the room Bob saw that he carried several pieces of soft, new cord in one hand, and a short clothesline in the other.

"Get a chair, Grubb," were the words with which Mr. Smithers addressed his confederate.

Mr. Grubb went into the front room and brought a stout chair.

"As I believe in people making themselves comfortable when they can, I will request you, Mr. Brooks, to make use of this chair," said Mr. Smithers, with an inexplicable smile.

"The stool suits me all right," replied Bob, who suspected the big man's intentions.

"I prefer that you should use the chair," said Mr. Smithers in a tone which showed Bob that he did not have any choice in the matter, so, fearing the outcome of this exchange of seats, he seated himself in the chair as directed.

"Why can't you be as obliging in reference to that order for the Red Dog stock I spoke about? It will save you a heap of trouble."

"Because I don't propose to be swindled," said Bob, stoutly.

"I think I made you a bona fide offer of twelve cents a share for the thirty thousand shares you hold of Red Dog, that is \$3,600 for the lot. There was no swindle in that, was there? Could you have sold the stock anywhere in New York for over half of that, you little monkey? You know you couldn't. But you banked against the future, as indicated in that letter of mine which you had the luck to pick up. You intended to do me, the legitimate owner of that pointer, out of results I expected to gain. In your eagerness to go the whole hog you have overshot your mark. Instead of the \$3,600 you might have received, you will now get nothing. Now, Grubb, tie the young man to the chair with the clothesline," and Mr. Smithers grabbed Bob and held him so he could not move.

Mr. Grubb immediately got busy, and the boy was soon secured, though his arms were left free.

"Now, Grubb, fetch that table with the writing materials from the front room," said Mr. Smithers.

The obedient accomplice lost no time in carrying out his orders.

Mr. Smithers drew the stool up to the table, which had been placed in front of the boy, and sitting down, facing Bob, soon produced the following:

"New York, October 12, 190—.

"Messrs. Scrooge & Sharpley,

"— Wall Street, New York.

"Please deliver to the bearer, Mr. Smithers, my thirty thousand shares of Red Dog stock, and take his receipt for same."

"Now sign it," said the big man, after he had read it over to the boy, offering Bob the pen.

The youth shook his head.

"All right," replied Mr. Smithers, coolly. "I will have to give you a taste of the hempen necklace. Tie his thumbs together, Grubb—tight, mind you. That's the ticket. Now the necklace."

Mr. Grubb put one of the hempen threads around Bob's neck, and left just sufficient play for the boy to breathe easily. Then he wound the two ends around one another and made them fast to the chair-top, after drawing Bob's head back as far as it would go without choking him.

Mr. Smithers then picked up the water pitcher and soaked the hempen cord well with water.

"The chief advantage of the hempen necklace as a persuader for obstinate people is that when you wet it, it has a tendency to shrink on drying. This is rather unpleasant to the person most interested in the phenomenon," explained the big man derisively. "This is an instance where a little foresight is worth a considerable amount of hindsight. If you can see through a millstone when there's a hole in it, I would suggest that you sign this paper before things go any further."

But Bob, though he now had a strong suspicion of what he was up against, was made of stern stuff, and he did not propose to give in until it was impossible for him to hold out.

As he gave no sign of yielding to Mr. Smithers' suggestion, that gentleman turned to his accomplice:

"You may go downstairs, Grubb. If I should need you I will give you the signal."

The necklace was slow in its development but as sure as death, and the red-faced man was in no hurry, as he had the whole day and night before him.

He drew a cigar from his vest-pocket, lit it with much deliberation, and began to pace up and down the room with his hands behind his back.

Every once in awhile he would pause to look at his victim, or to glance out of the window, where he could see the clouds breaking away and cold gleams of sunshine peeping through on the water-soaked landscape.

A smell of cooking came up through the cracks in the floor from the room below.

About this time Bob noticed that cord about his thumbs was becoming painfully tight.

He drew his hands up a couple of times in an effort to get relief, and Mr. Smithers observed the movement with a sardonic grin.

"Hurts a little, does it?" he said maliciously. "That isn't a circumstance to what's coming, my friend. If you're ready for the paper, the paper is ready for you."

But Bob set his teeth together and wondered how long he could bear the torture in prospect.

"Some people are born pigheaded, others acquire pigheadedness," remarked Mr. Smithers, as he chucked his cigar butt into a corner. "I don't know to which class you belong, Master Brooks, but if this patent of mine doesn't cure you of it nothing will."

Half an hour passed, and not only had the pressure around Bob's thumbs increased to real torture, but the cord was now contracting his throat so that it was beginning to be a trouble to breathe without a sense of suffocation.

Mr. Smithers watched the results of his scheme with great satisfaction.

"It'll fetch him, all right," he muttered, rubbing his hands together. "It's bound to."

He drew a sharp pocketknife and laid it on the table, ready for business when the boy yielded.

At last Bob could not repress a groan, and the drops of perspiration stood out on his forehead.

Then he began to gasp a little for breath, but still he held out.

"Haven't you had enough of this yet?" asked Mr. Smithers, angry at his endurance.

But the boy gave no sign.

"Hang you for a cantankerous little monkey!" growled the big man impatiently.

Then he noticed that the boy's face was deathly white, and his head had swung helplessly to the right.

This sign alarmed him, for he had not the slightest intention of killing his victim.

Bending down, he saw the reason for it.

Bob's endurance had reached the limit and he had fainted.

CHAPTER XIII.

ON THE THRESHOLD OF FREEDOM.

Mr. Smithers did not lose a moment in snatching up the penknife and severing the cord about Bob's neck.

Then, while he cut the boy's thumbs loose, he stamped on the floor to attract Mr. Grubb's attention.

"Fetch up that flask of brandy!" he bellowed down to his accomplice.

Mr. Grubb brought it up to the room, and was directed to bathe Bob's temples and to pour some of it down his throat.

As soon as the lad showed signs of reviving Mr. Smithers withdrew.

"How do you feel now?" asked Mr. Grubb, when Bob opened his eyes.

"Nothing to brag about," replied the boy, in a shaky tone.

His thumbs were puffed up and inflamed, and a red ring encircled his throat.

"Take a good swig of this and you'll feel better," suggested Mr. Grubb, holding the flask to his mouth again.

"That's enough," said Bob, after he had swallowed about a teaspoonful. "I don't care for the stuff."

"You don't know what you're missing," said Mr. Grubb, wiping the mouth of the flask with the back of his horny hand and then gulping down about half of the remaining contents of the bottle, after taking a hasty glance at the door, lest his employer be in sight.

Bob leaned his head back on the chair-top and closed his eyes.

"You might have saved yourself all this if you had done what Mr. Smithers wanted you to do," said Mr. Grubb, with an affectionate look at the liquor which still remained in the flask.

Bob, however, paid no attention to his remark.

"I ain't got no orders to release you from the chair," went on the old sinner apologetically; "but if Mr. Smithers says so I'll come back and do it."

Then he shuffled out of the room.

Twenty minutes later he came up again with a plate of vegetable soup, which he placed before Bob, who now felt very much recovered.

This was followed by a dish of meat and bread and a bowl of coffee.

Bob had some difficulty in cutting the meat, as his thumbs were as sore as a couple of angry boils. His throat bothered him some in swallowing his food, but he managed to get away with the dinner, for he had a healthy appetite at all times.

As Mr. Grubb had made no offer to release him from the chair, Bob thought he would attend to that matter himself.

His arms being at liberty, it was a simple matter to use the sharp edge of the table knife on his bonds.

He did not sever the rope entirely, but cut it so that a sharp pull would break it in several places.

This having been accomplished, Bob waited for the appearance of Mr. Grubb to clear away the dishes.

It was a good hour before he came up again, and then he appeared to be somewhat unsteady on his feet.

"You're looking all right," said Mr. Grubb, as he began to gather up the dishes in a jerky fashion that threatened to land them on the floor.

The fishy look in his eyes explained his erratic behavior. He had been drinking something stronger than coffee at his dinner.

"Mr. Smithers will see you later," he said, as he started with uncertain steps for the door.

"Where is he?" asked Bob, at a hazard. "Downstairs?"

"Maybe so, maybe not," returned Mr. Grubb, with a silly wink.

Then he sailed out of the room, with his whole attention concentrated on the dishes, trying to keep them poised on his arm.

He left the door partly ajar, and the boy was quick to take advantage of that fact.

"Now is my chance to make a break for liberty," said Bob to himself, instantly on the alert.

He snapped the frayed sections of the clothesline and shook himself free.

Then he softly crossed the room and listened at the partly opened door.

The crash of a dish below in the entry showed that Mr. Grubb had not been entirely successful in carrying the few pieces of crockery unharmed to their destination.

He heard the old man fling sundry choice remarks at the broken pieces and then continue on into the kitchen.

Bob left his prison room and took temporary refuge in the front apartment.

From there he heard Mr. Grubb sweeping up the debris and talking to himself.

In a few moments the old rascal shuffled upstairs again, and the boy got ready to tackle him as soon as it became evident that he had discovered the prisoner was missing from the chair.

Mr. Grubb, however, as soon as he reached the landing, confined himself to relocking the padlock, apparently not considering it necessary to glance inside of the room.

This accomplished, he went downstairs again, and Bob was left to his own devices.

The first thing the boy did was to take a look from the windows in front of the house, and the same expanse of moist meadow land greeted his eye.

"I'd give something to know where this building is located. It seems to be in the midst of a swampy spot of considerable extent. It can't be a great way from the city, if I was brought here in a carriage. It is possible I may have been transferred to some other kind of conveyance, a boat, for instance. I hardly think my abductors would dare risk the chance of putting me on board a train. At any rate, it's up to me now to get away before Mr. Smithers returns, for I've an idea he isn't in the house at the present moment. He's rather too big and strong a proposition for me to handle successfully, especially considering the condition of my hands. If I get out of this with a whole body, I'll bet I'll be foxy after this. I've had all the experience I want with Mr. Smithers."

Bob removed his shoes and crept cautiously down the staircase, which creaked a good bit under his weight.

The house being perfectly silent, this noise seemed quite loud to his excited fancy.

At every step he took he almost expected to see a door open below and Mr. Grubb, at least, come out to see what was making the disturbance.

Had he been able to look into the kitchen that moment he would have been somewhat reassured, for Mr. Grubb was sprawled out in a chair and snoring like a good fellow.

Bob finally reached the entry below, and seeing a door ahead of him he tried it, only to find it locked and the key missing.

Peering through the keyhole, he saw it communicated with the outside of the building.

"Too bad! I can't get out this way, that's clear," he muttered.

Another door to his right opened to his touch, and he walked into the main entry leading to the front door.

"I hope I have better luck this way," he said, tiptoeing to the door. "By the great hornspoon! The key is in the door!" he cried in delight. "I shall be out of this in about three shakes of a lamb's tail."

He sat on the carpetless floor and pulled on his shoes.

There was a door to the right and also one to the left of him.

He suddenly experienced a curiosity to look into them.

It is funny how trifles will turn the scale for or against one in this world.

Both rooms were entirely bare, and one had a great gaping hole in the floor.

Bob lost several minutes by looking into them.

Those minutes proved of much advantage to him.

At last his hand was on the front door, and he was in the very act of turning the key in the lock when, with startling distinctness, a series of loud knocks came on the door within an inch or two of his nose.

Bob started back in a state of consternation.

CHAPTER XIV.

MR. SMITHERS IS OUTWITTED.

"Jumping jewlikins!" he exclaimed under his breath. "This is tough! Just as I was on the point of getting away! I hope it isn't Mr. Smithers, but I'm afraid it is. Talk about hard luck!"

Thump, thump, thump, thump!

The knocking was repeated more insistently than before, as if the visitor was getting impatient, and the noise resounded through the almost empty house with great distinctness.

"Gee! That's racket enough to awaken the dead!" muttered Bob, as he hastily sought the shelter of one of the empty rooms. "As Mr. Grubb isn't dead, nor deaf, either, it should fetch him here in short order."

Mr. Grubb, however, seemed to be taking his time on this occasion.

The truth of the matter was that he was in a stupid sleep in the kitchen.

Thump, thump, thump, boom!

The last was a vicious kick administered to the lower panel of the front door by the man outside.

This must have aroused Mr. Grubb, for Bob presently heard him shuffling along the entry at a slow pace.

Thump, thump, boom! Thump, thump, boom!

Bob could not repress a grin, in spite of the seriousness of his position.

Mr. Grubb reached the front door at last and fumbled with the lock.

"What the thunder is the matter with you, Grubb?" thundered Mr. Smithers when he stepped into the house. "You've been drinking, have you? Come along, you apology for a man, till I put your head under the pump and sober you up. What do you think I hired you for, eh?"

Bob could hear the big man drag his accomplice back into the kitchen.

"This is where I sneak," said Bob, opening the door of the room where he had been hiding and gliding toward the street door.

A fresh surprise awaited him.

This time the key was gone.

"What am I going to do now?" almost groaned the brave boy, so acute was his disappointment.

That was the question—what was he going to do?

His escape from the room would soon be discovered, and there being no evidence that he had left the house, Mr. Smithers would certainly ransack the place from roof to ground floor in an effort to get hold of him again.

And Bob was no match for the big western man, physically speaking.

"I'll try the windows in this room," hazarded the boy, retreating to the empty room he had just left.

He did, but they were all securely nailed.

He slipped across the hall and tried those in the other room.

The result was the same. All were nailed up.

Then Bob's eye fell on the hole in the floor, and down he went on his hands and knees and began peering into the black void below.

"Blest if I can see a thing, not even the depth of the place. Maybe it's half full of water. It smells damp."

Bob recollected that he had some matches in a pocket safe.

He struck one, and by the light of it saw that he was looking into a kind of cellar, with a stone flooring covered with an inch or two of stagnant water.

"I'm going down, though it looks as though I was jumping from the frying-pan into the fire."

The distance was only about eight feet, and when he landed he struck another match.

Following the foundation of the building, he found it was built on cemented rock, with apparently not an opening of any kind.

"All the good I've done by coming down here was to put myself in a trap," he said, in a dejected tone. "Hello, what's this?"

He stumbled over an obstruction.

Striking another match, Bob saw it was a small skiff with a pair of oars.

It did not look as if it had been used in months.

"How did this get in here?" mused the boy. "Not by that hole in the floor, I'll bet. Then there must be a doorway opening out on the stream I saw under the window of the room above."

Yes, there was a small square opening in the stone wall, and it was closed by wooden flaps, like cellar doors generally are, and secured by a hasp held in place by a big nail attached to a ring.

Bob drew out the nail and pushed open the flaps.

The hinges were rusty and worked grudgingly, but they yielded to the boy's efforts.

A road to freedom had been reached at last, but it was a wet road.

The creek flowed right alongside the house within a few inches of the bottom of the opening, making it a simple matter for a pair of stout arms to launch the skiff.

"Mr. Smithers is bound to discover me the moment I get out on that stream. Unless he's got another boat I'll have the advantage of him, however. This creek runs into a narrow stream further on. I don't know where it leads

to, and I don't care much, if it will only get me out of this scrape."

With that he began pushing the boat through the opening as well as he could, considering the state of his thumbs, which were still in bad shape.

"I shan't be able to do any very hard rowing, that's sure. I can't grip the oars, except with my fingers."

At that moment he heard a noise above.

It was the solid stamp of Mr. Smithers' number nines.

And they seemed to be bent on business, too.

"I'll bet he's found out I'm missing and is making things hum," grinned Bob, working all the harder to get the boat through the opening.

It certainly would not do for Mr. Smithers to come upon him before he had accomplished his task.

In his excitement Bob forgot all about his sore thumbs.

Gradually the boat slipped out toward the creek.

It was dipping in the water when the boy heard the voice of Mr. Smithers roar out behind him:

"So that's where you are, you infernal little monkey!"

Bob turned his head to see the ponderous legs and body of the western man coming down through the opening in the floor, thirty feet away.

With a desperate shove the boy succeeded in launching the skiff into the creek as the man came splashing toward him along the stone flooring.

"Now I've got you, and you won't have another chance to play me such a trick again."

But Mr. Smithers was mistaken.

As he stretched out his arm to grasp the boy Bob eluded him, sprang through the opening into the boat, and pushed off out of his enemy's reach.

"Come back here, confound you!" blustered the red-faced man, thrusting his head and shoulders out through the opening and glaring after the boy. "Come back, do you hear?"

"Not on your life, Mr. Smithers," he replied, with a sense of exhilaration at his escape.

"Come back, or I'll shoot you full of holes!" and Mr. Smithers reached for the six-shooter, which he was accustomed to carry in his hip-pocket, notwithstanding the Penal Code of the State of New York forbade him doing so.

But the westerner had little respect for the laws of any section of the country when they operated against his own convenience.

Bob was not a little startled at this new aspect of affairs, which he had not anticipated.

But he was not going back, just the same.

He might better take the chance of being hit by a bullet than the certainty of what he knew awaited him if Mr. Smithers got his hands on him again.

Grasping the oars with as firm a grip as he could, he pulled for all he was worth, and the skiff being light, it shot forward at a good clip, and had gone more than fifty feet down the creek before the western man got his gun pointed at him.

There was a flash and a crack, and a ball clipped a chip out of one of the oars.

A second, third and fourth report followed, but none of the balls came nearer, for Bob was rapidly widening his distance.

Mr. Smithers recognized the fruitlessness of any further target practice and put up his revolver, but if there had been any fish in the creek they would have been astonished at the language he hurled after the escaping boy.

If the western man had any other plans looking toward the recapture of his late prisoner, he did not immediately put them into practice, and so Bob was permitted to continue on down the stream unmolested.

CHAPTER XV.

HOME AGAIN.

About a mile below the old house on the meadows Bob saw a countryfied-looking boy, with his trousers tucked up to his knees, wading along the edge of the stream.

"Hello!" said Bob, hailing him.

The boy stopped and stared at him.

"Say, what part of the country am I in?" asked the Wall Street messenger, anxious to locate himself.

The boy looked astonished.

"Why, don't you know?" he said.

"No, or I wouldn't have asked you," replied Bob.

The boy seemed to think his questioner was kidding him, for he did not make any reply, but began kicking the water about with his feet.

"Aren't you going to tell me?" in a tone so earnest that the bareheaded boy finally blurted out:

"Why, you're in Jersey, of course."

"Whereabouts in New Jersey?"

"Hackensack meadows."

"Oh," said Bob. "Well, I want to get back to New York by the shortest way. How will I manage it?"

"What, in that boat?" grinned the lad.

"No, I don't care anything about the boat. You can have it if you want it, if you will come along and pilot me to some place where I can get a car for Jersey City."

"Do you mean that?" cried the boy eagerly.

"Sure thing," replied Bob, as he pulled in close to the edge of the marsh.

The boy clambered on board.

"There's a trolley car now," he said, pointing to a bridge which crossed the meadows some distance below.

"I see it."

"You can climb up that bridge and catch a car when one comes along. What brought you out here? And how could you come here without knowing where you were?" asked the boy, thinking Bob's predicament was rather astonishing.

"I was brought out here last night by a man who intended to keep me a prisoner in an old house on a creek a mile above here. I just escaped from him."

"Is that so?" said the boy, still more amazed. "I know the place. Nobody lives there, and hain't for years."

"There's a couple of men there now, if they haven't skipped by this time."

"Going to tell the perlice, ain't you?"

"I'm going to get home, first thing I do."

"Live in New York?"

"That's what I do."

"What's the matter with your hands?" asked the boy, regarding Bob's swollen and inflamed thumbs with curiosity.

"Hurt them," replied the young messenger, not thinking it necessary to enter into any further particulars with the young Jerseyite.

"They look sore."

"They are sore, and mighty sore, too."

Finally they reached the trolley bridge, and Bob saw he could easily clamber up on the structure; so he bade the boy good-by, told him to keep the skiff, and started to walk toward Jersey City. When a car came along he boarded it.

When he reached the city he went into a drug store and had his thumbs attended to by a clerk, after which he walked down to the Desbrosses Street ferry.

After crossing the Hudson he took an elevated train for One Hundred and Sixteenth street, this station being about a block from his home.

The first person he met that he knew was the janitor of the flat, who looked him all over and asked him where he had been.

"Your mother and sisters are worried to death about you," he said, "and your friend Sharpe has been chasing around town trying to locate you. You never said a word about going anywhere."

"I didn't get much of a chance," replied Bob, as he hurried upstairs and burst in suddenly on his astonished relatives.

"Why, Bob Brooks!" cried his sister. "Where on earth have you been?"

Before he could answer the rest of the family were about him, his mother crying and smiling at the same time.

Then he told the strange story of his abduction, and when he showed the now faint ring about his throat and exhibited his bandaged thumbs the little mother and the two girls shuddered and cried over him.

"I think I could get away with a good square meal, mother, if you have got such a thing around the house," said Bob, for it was now after five in the afternoon.

"We've been so upset about you, Robert, that we haven't thought of dinner; but now we'll get it right away," and the four adjourned to the kitchen, as Bob still had lots to say that they wanted to hear.

Phil Sharpe came in while the meal was under way.

"So you've turned up at last, have you, old man!" said Phil, in a tone expressive of his satisfaction. "Where the dickens have you been hiding since last night?"

Of course Bob had to go all over his story again for the benefit of his chum.

"Gee whiz! You had a lucky escape!" said Phil. "But

I say, you never told me anything about your buying Red Dog stock."

"It's a good rule in Wall Street not to tell all you know, even to your personal friends."

"Well, I think you might have told me," said Phil, in an aggrieved voice.

"The day I saw you at Duncan's was when I made the first purchase of the stock. Mr. Duncan had five thousand shares he was anxious to get off his hands, and I accommodated him."

"Five thousand shares!" gasped Phil. "What did you pay for it?"

"You'll have to excuse me refusing to answer that question for the present, Phil. I didn't pay a great deal, for the stock is not in the market, and hasn't been for two years. There is a prospect, however, that it will be listed again in the near future on the western exchanges. That is what I am banking on."

"How many shares have you got altogether?" asked Phil, inquisitively.

"I own twenty thousand and control ten thousand more."

"You are a full-fledged speculator, aren't you?" a bit enviously.

"Oh, no; I'm only very small potatoes in that line."

"You're making out pretty well at it, all the same."

"I'm not kicking. The money I made in Consolidated Gas I put into five hundred shares of C. H. & D. at 52. It closed yesterday at 53 and a fraction."

"Suffering beeswax! I s'pose it won't be long before you'll leave Scrooge & Sharpley and set up for yourself," said Phil, lost in wonder at his friend's uniform success in the stock market.

"Oh, I'm in no hurry. So far my judgment has been pretty correct; but you can never tell when you may slip up. After I get a few thousand dollars together I might happen to run against a snag that would land me high and dry on the Wall Street shoals, where the bones of thousands of lambs are bleaching already."

"That's no dream," agreed Phil, with a sage nod of his head.

"You'll stay to dinner, won't you, Phil?" said Bob, as his sister Nellie began to set the table.

"I had my dinner hours ago."

"Well, have a cup of tea, anyway. I want you to go down to police headquarters with me. I'm going to put the police on to Mr. Smithers."

"They'll probably turn the matter over to the New Jersey authorities."

"I don't care what they do if they keep Mr. Smithers from interfering with me in the future. I tell you, he's a hard nut to have anything to do with. In my imagination I shall feel that cord around my neck for the next month. As for my thumbs, they pain me as bad as a case of the toothache."

It was after dark when the two boys reached Mulberry street and introduced themselves to the official in charge.

Bob told his story of the abduction and his subsequent adventures in the old house on the Hackensack meadows.

He produced Mr. Smithers' Broadway address, though he had doubts about that individual ever showing up there again.

On being questioned Bob had to admit that the whole trouble rose out of his refusal to sell Mr. Smithers several thousand shares of western mining stock.

Of course an enterprising reporter from the police news bureau across the street got hold of the affair, called on Bob that evening for more facts, and the next morning's edition of his paper had a sensational story, in which the Wall Street boy figured in regulation yellow journal fashion.

CHAPTER XVI.

RED DOG BOBS UP SERENELY.

"My gracious, Bob Brooks!" exclaimed Kitty Barnes, when she entered the office at a few minutes after nine Monday morning and found the messenger boy already at his post, "what haven't you been doing since Saturday! Why, the morning paper has a big account of a most remarkable adventure, of which you were the hero. Am I to believe all I see printed about you here?" and she held up the newspaper.

"It's a pretty correct account in the main," admitted the boy, with his usual grin.

"And your poor hands!" cried the girl sympathetically, as she gently took hold of the bandaged members.

"They feel as awkward as a couple of lobster claws," said Bob.

"And it was all because you wouldn't sell that horrid man that western mining stock of yours. Do you think the police will catch him?"

"Ask me something easier, Kitty."

Just then Mr. Sharpley came in.

"Well, Bob, that Red Dog mining stock seems to be giving you quite a run. After reading the newspaper account of your adventures of yesterday I'm beginning to believe there's more in Red Dog than meets the eye. Mr. Scrooge told me you refused eight cents a share for it in his presence."

"That's right."

"The same stock, too, that I sold you the day before for a cent a share! Mr. Scrooge says you picked up a letter on the street which proved to contain a certain pointer on the stock—something about fresh developments in the mine, etc."

"That is quite true, Mr. Sharpley."

"I believe you also bought some of the stock from Duncan & Company?"

"Yes, sir, five thousand shares. Besides which I got hold of another block of ten thousand from the widow of the man who bought twenty thousand shares—I am holding the other ten thousand in her interest."

Mr. Sharpley whistled softly.

"You're branching out as a little speculator. I guess

you're the shrewdest boy in Wall Street, bar none. If anything comes of this Red Dog matter you'll be the talk of the Street."

"Well, sir, I'm not going to allow it to interfere with your business while I'm your messenger."

"You don't have to tell me that, Bob. Mr. Scrooge and myself have perfect confidence in you."

"Thank you, sir," said Bob, feeling very much gratified at this expression on the part of the junior partner, who turned on his heel and entered the private room.

A dozen brokers who knew Bob spoke to him on the street that morning about the newspaper account of his late adventure.

As the name of the stock involved had not appeared in print, most of the Wall Street men, with an eye to business, wanted to find out about it, but the boy was non-committal in his answers.

At least two dozen brokers spoke to Mr. Sharpley when he appeared at the Exchange, and every one of them tried to find out the name of the stock mentioned, but Mr. Sharpley was not telling all he knew to his business rivals.

Reporters for other papers waited on Bob at the office to try and dig up a few additional particulars.

The afternoon edition of the newspaper which had published the morning account reproduced a photograph of the house on the Hackensack meadows, to which were added drawings in outline of four incidents of the affair.

Altogether the matter created quite a little stir on Wall Street, to which the lack of the name of the stock at the bottom of the outrage added a spice of mystery.

Bob did not fail to keep track of C. H. & D. that day, notwithstanding the many other things which occupied his attention.

Quite a batch of the stock changed hands around 54.

In Bob's opinion, it was doing very well for the present, and he was satisfied.

The boy watched the papers during the week for news about Mr. Smithers and his elderly accomplice, but they had managed to elude capture.

Under the influence of steady purchases, quietly engineered by the brokers employed by the combination, C. H. & D. stock gradually advanced in price to 57 before Saturday. This represented a gain of \$2,500 for Bob.

The Sunday papers came out with the report that C. H. & D. had gobbled up the Lake Shore Steamship Line, running between Chicago and Buffalo.

Several big brokers not interested in the clique wired Chicago for a confirmation of the deal, and the replies they severally received led to active results about the C. H. & D. corner on the floor of the Exchange Monday morning.

Heavy purchases of the stock were made, and as the price continued to ascend more brokers and some of the outside public got interested in the stock, and lively times were in sight with C. H. & D. at 63 when the Exchange closed for the day.

"I think you are getting your share of Wall Street luck, Bob," said Phil, as the two boys strolled up Broadway together that afternoon after their offices had closed. "C.

H. & D., your latest investment, has now got all the brokers by the ears. How the dickens did you come to pick it out?"

"That's one of the secrets of the business," grinned Bob.

"Maybe you got a tip," suggested Phil, inquisitively.

"Maybe I did, there are such an awful lot of them flying around loose."

"Rats! Why don't you say you don't want to tell and be done with it?"

"Don't get mad over it, Phil. We're friends, you know, and I hope we will always remain so; but in matters of business, especially such a risky business as the stock market, I must be allowed to remain mum if I prefer, from motives of prudence, to do so."

"All right, Bob," said Phil, getting bravely over his pique. "Let it go at that."

"As you haven't said a word about Red Dog for a week," said Bob, "I'll let you read this clipping from the Denver Mining Gazette, which Mr. Sharpley handed me this morning. You will see that the mine is now without doubt coming to the front. That'll set a lot of sapheads who parted with the stock for a mere song to thinking. I'll bet your boss is a whole lot sorry he sold me that five thousand block. If he isn't he will be before many moons."

The clipping ran as follows:

"RED DOG.—Conditions at the Red Dog mine continue to improve, and an application has been made by the management to both the Denver and San Francisco exchanges to have the stock relisted, and no reasonable objection can be offered to this request. It has been rumored for weeks that this will prove one of the greatest mines of the Goldfield district and of Nevada. It is now claimed by conservative mining men that nearly three-quarters of a million dollars' worth of ore has already been blocked out, and the shaft is not yet down two hundred feet. A contract has been let to drive a cross-cut in the direction of the huge blowout found on the property. We unhesitatingly advise our readers to try and get hold of this stock, which seems to be largely held by those on the inside. It will prove a valuable investment."

"You were born under a lucky star, Bob," said Phil, as he returned the clipping.

"Oh, pshaw! Give me credit for a little brains, will you!"

"Don't you believe in luck, also?"

"Yes, there is such a thing; though I think people make their own luck."

"I haven't made anything but my salary. I s'pose I'm lucky to have a job."

"You're lucky to have a good job. I don't think you have anything to complain about at Duncan's."

"I can't complain of not having enough to do, at any rate," grinned Phil.

"Don't worry about that. Christmas is coming, and the boss will remember your noble efforts when he hands out your little special envelope."

"Thanks for nothing. Unless Duncan sees me a few plunks better this year I won't be able to make good all the shoe leather I've worn out in his service."

"Better than wearing it out hunting a job."

By this time they had arrived at City Hall Park, so each invested in an evening paper, descended the stairs of one of the subway entrances, and took a Lenox Avenue express for home.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE RED DOG MINE PROVES TO BE A NEW MONTE CHRISTO.

There was great excitement in and around the Stock Exchange next morning over C. H. & D.

Everybody was talking about it.

The paragraphs in the newspapers relating to it sent a small army of venturesome lambs down to try their luck in slippery Wall Street.

An upward tendency was given to the whole list by the rise of C. H. & D., and the bulls were radiant.

And every point that the stock soared meant an addition of five hundred dollars to Bob Brooks.

When he went to lunch he was three thousand dollars better off, on paper, than when he came to work that morning.

Many brokers had sold the stock heavily for future delivery, and had been called by the purchasers.

They could not get enough to fill their contracts, hence the brisk demand sent it up in bounds that afternoon.

Many boys would have lost their heads over such a rapid advance in wealth as Bob was experiencing that day.

But as the ticker in the office recorded the continuous rise Bob remained as cool as though he had no interest in the matter whatever.

The last quotation at three o'clock showed C. H. & D. had touched 76.

"That puts me twelve thousand dollars ahead," he said with a thrill of delight, as he allowed the tape to slip from his fingers. "That's a lot of money to make in a few days. I think it's time I was getting out with my winnings. No one can tell when the end of this deal will be reached. The clique may already be quietly unloading their holdings, and then, with no big interests to sustain this inflated price, somebody will get hurt through their pocketbook, and I don't care to be one of the unfortunates. Phil would certainly give me the laugh."

The next day C. H. & D. went up to 82, and Bob ordered his stock sold.

Not counting commissions, he was a clear winner of fifteen thousand dollars on the deal.

That afternoon he, Phil and Kitty Barnes celebrated the event at an ice cream parlor on Broadway, while the larger operators held high-jinks in a different way uptown.

It was merely a matter of taste—and money.

"Well, Bob," said Kitty next day, when he showed her

his check from Treadwell & Company for \$17,500, "what are you going to do with it this time?"

"Put it to work again."

"I told mother last night I was afraid you had the fever," replied the girl, in a strong tone of disapproval. "You are presuming on your good luck. Money that comes to Wall Street always seems to stay here in the long run. You have such a splendid little nest egg for the future I should think you'd prefer to hold on to what you have got. A bird in the hand is worth several in the bush."

"I didn't say I was going to put it to work in the Street, did I?" said Bob.

"Then you really don't mean to speculate any more?" exclaimed Kitty, her face lighting up with pleasure.

"I didn't say that, either. But as I can't say when I may get hold of another good thing in the market I'm going to invest fifteen thousand in real estate uptown. I will do it through my mother."

"Now, I think that's sensible. Really, I have some hopes for you, after all."

"Have you? You do me proud, Miss Barnes," and Bob bowed ironically.

"Now don't be ridiculous," said the girl, shaking her index finger at him. "Have you anything in view? A house, perhaps—it's so much better than living in a flat."

"You've hit it exactly, Kitty. I've heard of a fine place in the Bronx which can be bought cheap. It's an old family mansion that's to be sold to settle an estate. It's worth all of thirty-five thousand dollars, but I can buy it for twenty-six thousand. There are splendid grounds about it, which are now run to seed, but would greatly enhance the value of the property if put in good shape."

"But you haven't got twenty-six thousand dollars," said Kitty.

"Oh, I can easily get a nine thousand dollar mortgage, in fact, twice that amount if I wanted it, on the property."

"Well, I'm glad to know your money is going in the right direction at last."

"Yes," grinned Bob, "we Wall Street men need a good home."

"We Wall Street men!" mimicked Kitty with a laugh.

"Sure. I expect to get married one of these days, you know, and as I might have a large family I want a good-sized place. I s'pose you expect to get married, too, don't you?"

"I'm not thinking about such a thing."

"Now, I thought you girls thought about little else," snickered the boy.

"Why, the idea!"

"Well, Kitty, if no one wants you I might take pity on you myself. There's nothing mean about me."

"Don't you be so sure I'd have you if you asked me," said the girl, with a slight flush.

"Oh, you might do worse. I'm going to be a millionaire at twenty; then all the girls will be angling for me. Better get in on the ground floor while you have the chance."

"If you was to raffle yourself off, I might perhaps buy a chance," laughed the girl, as she turned to her work.

"I hear you've been monkeying with the market, young man," said Mr. Sharpley to Bob later in the day.

"Yes, sir," answered the boy, rather uncertain how his boss would take the matter, now that he had an inkling of the fact. "I bought some C. H. & D. stock from Treadwell & Company on a ten per cent. margin."

"C. H. & D., eh? What did you pay for it?"

"Fifty-two, sir."

Mr. Sharpley looked at him pretty hard.

"How came you to go into that before the rise? Another lucky accident, eh?"

"I heard a man say he expected it would go up soon," said Bob, with an innocent expression.

"It seems to me you are getting all the tips that are in sight. I was told you sold out yesterday, so you must have done well. I advise you not to take to stock gambling, Bob. You mustn't expect to have luck always run in your favor. Put your winnings in the bank and let them stay there."

"Thank you, sir. I won't forget your advice."

"That's right. Here is another article about your Red Dog mine. It has been listed on the western exchanges again and is quoted at fifteen cents. Any time you want to dispose of your holdings in that line I will get you a customer. How much have you got of it?"

"Thirty thousand shares, ten thousand of which belong to Mrs. Dickens, a friend of mine."

Mr. Sharpley nodded and turned to his desk.

On Saturday afternoon Bob and his mother visited the property in the Bronx and looked it over.

Bob had seen it before and was satisfied.

Mrs. Brooks made a deposit of \$2,600 and took the title deeds to have them passed upon by a lawyer.

She employed Mr. Scrooge's lawyer, who went before a judge and had her appointed as trustee for her son with reference to the property. In thirty days it came into her control, and the family moved at once from the flat in West One Hundred and Seventeenth street, and ate their Thanksgiving dinner in their new home. Mrs. Barnes and Miss Kitty, who were delighted with the place, were specially invited guests.

Before Christmas Bob had several offers to dispose of a large part of his Red Dog stock at a price ranging from twenty to thirty cents a share, but he refused to sell.

Duncan admitted to Mr. Sharpley that he felt sore at having practically given away his block of five thousand shares of that stock to Bob.

"That boy is about as clever a proposition as I ever met," he remarked. "He is likely to be one of the shrewdest and most successful operators in Wall Street before many years go by."

"He's all to the good, Duncan," replied Mr. Sharpley. "We will be sorry to lose him when he feels like branching out for himself. Why, he made enough out of the C. H. & D. boom awhile ago to buy a splendid piece of property in the Bronx."

"You don't mean it!" exclaimed Mr. Duncan, who went

away more impressed than ever with the business capacity of Scrooge & Sharpley's messenger.

Bob invited Mrs. Dickens to spend Christmas Day with them at the Bronx home, and Kitty and her mother also came to dinner.

Bob's sisters had taken a great fancy to Miss Barnes, and between themselves May and Nellie canvassed the probability of Kitty becoming a member of the family.

Occasionally they twitted Bob about the matter, but he always turned the subject down.

On the first of the year the railroad was completed to Goldfield, and during the first week in January shipments of ore began to be made by the Red Dog mine.

This naturally had a favorable effect on the stock, and considerable of it changed hands on the San Francisco and Denver exchanges at an average price of forty-five cents.

Still Bob held on to his holdings.

Through Scrooge & Sharpley, who were now acting as his brokers for the stock, he kept himself well informed about Goldfield matters.

The stock continued to advance steadily as the mine demonstrated its richness, and in the latter part of March it passed the dollar mark.

Then a new lode was opened up, with results similar to the famous Jumbo mine, and the stock boomed in a week to \$2.60 a share.

Acting on Mr. Scrooge's advice, Bob sold out at that figure, receiving in the aggregate seventy-eight thousand dollars, and he turned over twenty-six thousand to Mrs. Dickens as her share of the transaction, leaving him fifty-two thousand as the net result of an investment of only \$125.

Bob continued to work for Scrooge & Sharpley until he was twenty-one, when he went into business for himself, at which time Scrooge & Sharpley lost their stenographer. She entered into a life partnership with Robert Brooks, now the smartest of all the young brokers of Wall Street.

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| " 4.—A Game of Chance; or, The Boy Who Won Out                  | - - - - | " " 27th        |
| " 5.—Hard to Beat; or, The Cleverest Boy in Wall Street         | - - - - | " Nov. 3rd      |
| " 6.—Building a Railroad; or, The Young Contractors of Lakeview | - - - - | " " 10th        |
| " 7.—Winning His Way; or, The Youngest Editor in Green River    | - - - - | " " 17th        |
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